

1811

MINUTIÆ;

OR

LITTLE THINGS

FOR THE

POOR OF CHRIST'S FLOCK.

BY

J. W. PEERS, LL.D.

John Witherington

Who hath despised the day of small things?

ZECH. IV. 10.

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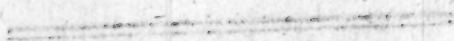
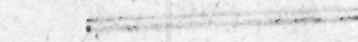
MINUTES

THE

ROOM OF CHRISTIANITY



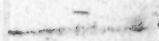
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READER,

EVERY star emits light ;—the least are not useless, though imperceptible by the human eye. Little things are necessary and beneficial, or God would not have made them. The smallest veins, through which the blood circulates, conduce to the welfare of the whole body. The widow's mite was accepted. If my mite of meditation may but be blessed to the Poor of Christ's Flock, they will, with me, join in giving glory to God. May great grace be upon thee, is the prayer of

Thy Servant in Christ,

J. W. P.

6 JU 62

Jon 1^o

MINUTIÆ,

&c. &c.

Jon 2^o

I JOHN III. 4.

Sin is the transgression of the law.

DOES one Sin incur the penalty of the law ? what then is the desert of my innumerable sins ? Is sin that abominable thing which God loatheth ? what a loathsome creature must I then be in the sight of God ! But I read, the * law is a school-master to lead sinners to Christ, and like the rod it makes persons sensible they are transgressors ; like the voice of the master it directs them how to act in future. Does it say, cursed † is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ? O soul humbling thought ! soul distressing declaration ! Yet, O my soul, hear the voice of the God of grace proclaiming in thine ears, “ Christ ‡ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” This is an heart-cheering voice, a soul-reviving sound. Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief ! It § became Christ to

* Gal. iii. 24.

† Gal. iii. 10.

‡ Rom. x. 4.

§ Matt. iii. 15.

fulfil all righteousness—for whom? for the unrighteous, who had broken God's law, and were incapable of yielding the obedience it required. It * behoved Christ to suffer: he died, the † Just one for unjust sinners, to bring them near to God. O my soul, fly to this refuge! Art thou weary of sin, and is the burden thereof grievous? art thou weary of the vanities of the world, and feeling guilt for having so long pursued them and delighted in them? Turn from all thine idols unto the living God; hear infinite love calling, inviting, welcoming thee: "Come ‡ unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Lord, enable me by faith to cast my burden on thee—the burden of my guilt, my sorrows, my afflictions, that I may be always relying upon thee, O Jesus, for grace, mercy, and peace.

ROMANS VIII. 3.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

WHERE sin hath abounded how grace superabounds. Man a rebel; God merciful, but not at the expence of any one of his attributes;

* Luke xxiv. 46.

† 1 Pet. iii. 18.

‡ Matt. xi. 28.

the law broken, justice satisfied, pardon to rebels proclaimed; mercy* and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other: the sinner saved, the Surety having made satisfaction to the full. No deficiency in the law it requires; in case of failure it condemns. Man how helpless! God how full of compassion! God † is love, from everlasting to everlasting. Come, O my soul, and consider this love of God; help ‡ laid upon one that is mighty, one chosen out of the people; one partaking of thy nature, (of thy nature, sin excepted, O man) by a voluntary assumption of it into his own person. The Father ordaining, the Son fulfilling, the Spirit teaching: what a mystery of love and grace! unfathomable! Shall man, shall I despise this so great salvation? the sacrifice offered—for what? for sin—for whom? for sinners of mankind. I am a sinner; it is my name, nature, and shame. Is salvation free? It is—God's gift, the consequence of his Son's making satisfaction on the cross. Lord make me willing to receive all from thee in Christ, and by him, that all the glory may redound to thee, and through him. O my soul, meditate upon Calvary; review the scene in Gethsemane; hear thy Redeemer cry, "It § is finished," and rejoice in everlasting love. Fear, love, and obey. Glory be to the Father for his unspeakable

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

† 1 John iv. 8.

‡ Psalm lxxxix. 19.

§ John xix. 30.

gift; to the Son for his unsearchable grace; to the Spirit for his unspeakable condescension in convincing, quickening, comforting. Believe, wonder, adore.

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 31.

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your abominations.

PRIDE reigns in the heart of man: and what has he to boast of? Self-sufficient he trusts in his own heart, and that notwithstanding his Maker has declared, He* that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. Vain and empty he glories in his shame, nor will he ever glory in any thing out of himself till his understanding is enlightened, and he sees how filthy, how ugly he is. This discovery makes him out of conceit with himself, and he feels unpleasant in his mind, unhappy in his soul, nor can he now derive any comfort or relief from what he heretofore considered as meritorious. The review is painful, the prospect gloomy. Grace brings the sinner to acknowledge his pride, to confess his sin, to mourn his vanity; he feels the hardness of his heart, and prays to God to

* Prov. xxviii. 26.

soften it, to change it. Rejoice, O my soul, that thou art not a stranger to such feelings; and never despair, since it is written, I* will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. How abundant the grace, how rich the mercy of God in Christ! Has Christ died for sinners? has he died for me? O † God, thy ways are past finding out. O my soul, he, even Jesus, hath taken away thy judgments; He ‡ hath cast out thine enemy, even the natural enmity of thy heart; hence thy self-loathing, and hence thy love of Christ. Sinner, what is most loathsome in thine eyes? is it thyself? What is most desirable to thy soul? is it to be renewed into the image of thy Redeemer? is it to be living to the glory of God? Then rejoice that the Lord thy God hath put his Spirit within thee. Rejoice § in the Lord.

PSALM XXIX. 4.

The voice of the Lord is powerful.

HOW calm the spirit of the justified sinner under the various dispensations of his God! Storms and tempests may be round about him,

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

† Rom. xi. 33.

‡ Zeph. iii. 15.

§ Phil. iv. 4.

but confidence in God is his strong support. The voice of the Lord is powerful in thunder : let me hear and fear, for thou speakest the attention of man to thyself. But thy voice in thy law is terrible ; and yet, while terrible in thy doings, how merciful in thy dealings ! Thy law condemns sinners, they hear it, and thereby their ears are open to hear the glad tidings of thy gospel—*that*, thy small still voice, speaking salvation by grace through the blood of the Lamb. Awaken my soul more, comfort me more. Does thy law condemn ? Thy gospel points to Christ for redemption. I am guilty ; but is there no help ? no hope ? Yes, the * Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. Behold him, look to him, O my soul, who hath said, Look † unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. What words of grace, peace, and comfort ! Speak Lord to my soul, that I may find thy word to be the ‡ power of God to the salvation of my soul. But do I love God, and delight in him ? why then such aboundings of sinful thoughts ? why such perverseness of the will ? such faintness of spirit ? O sinful corrupt nature, what art thou ! how should my soul be humbled, my supplication be doubled. Lord, quicken me with thy free Spirit, that I may run in the way of thy commandments. Let me hear thy powerful voice of direction,

* Rev. xiii. 8.

† Isa, xlv. 22.

‡ Rom. i. 16.

This* is the way, walk ye in it. Let me hear thy voice of comfort, I am † with thee, fear not; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

JOHN VI. 48.

I am that bread of life.

WHAT bread is to the body that Christ is to the soul of every regenerate sinner. Animal life is supported by food taken into the stomach, and blessed of God for that end: so spiritual life is supported by Christ the bread of life, the food of the soul, apprehended or taken into the soul by faith. Eat and your † soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. But to whom is Christ that bread of life? is it to those who are hungering and thirsting after the things of this world, which perish in the using? No; but to them who are hungering § and thirsting after the kingdom of God and his righteousness; to them who are looking to him in faith for that righteousness of God which will justify them, and for that blood || which purges the conscience from dead works to

* Isa. xxx. 21.

† Isa. xli. 10.

‡ Isa. lv. 3.

§ Matt. v. 6.

|| Heb. ix. 14.

serve the living God, and who by * patient continuance in well doing (the fruit of faith in Christ) are seeking for glory, and honour, and immortality. O my soul, what are thy sensations, feelings, and appetites? art thou hungering and thirsting for Christ? is he thy life? art thou by faith appropriating this Christ to thyself? Then none so precious, none so desirable. The heaven of thy happiness here is to find thy spiritual life flourishing; and the happiness of that heaven where thou longest to be, consists, in thy opinion, in being more like Christ, and being where he is. Hear Christ thy Saviour God addressing thee, Come † eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled:—'Tis ‡ the voice of thy beloved. Thou wert once a captive to sin and Satan, now thou art Christ's captive: rejoice in thy deliverer, glory in thy conqueror, and evidence thy soul is alive to him who is the life of thy soul.

ISAIAH XLIII. 5.

I am with thee.

GRACIOUS declaration! consoling thought! Wheresoever I am my God is with me. Why then should I fear? Is Satan roaring as a

* Rom. ii. 7.

† Prov. ix. 5.

‡ Cantic. ii. 8.

devouring lion? God* is my strength, a very present help in time of need. Who† is he that contendeth with me? the Lord my Saviour is with me to help me. Who is he that accuseth me? Jesus my friend‡, that sticketh closer than a brother, is near to justify me. Do waves and billows dash against me? do troubles increase and multiply? who is it says, Fear not, I am with thee? Even Jesus, my Lord and my God. Rely then, O my soul, upon the God of my salvation; be of good cheer, for if God be for thee, who can be against thee? Yea, though an host be against thee, yet remember thy God says, I am with thee. Art thou dismayed and cast down, labouring under apprehensions, and, from a conviction of thine own weakness, thinking thou shalt one day perish by the hands of Saul? recollect who says unto thee, I am with thee. What a mercy this stands in the present tense, for the comfort of the believer in every time and in every trouble. But I am so vile, so polluted—I am with thee to purify thee, to cleanse thee; my blood cleanses from all sin. But I am so weak and helpless—I am with thee to help thee. But I am so ignorant—I am with thee to teach thee. Yet I am so hard-hearted—I am with thee to || take from thee the heart of stone, and give thee an heart of flesh.

* Psalm xlv. 1.

† Isa. l. 8.

‡ Prov. 18. 24.

§ 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

|| Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

Aye, but I have sinned against reason, conscience, light, and revelation—I am with thee to * heal thy backslidings ; I am with thee in affliction, thy Father correcting thee, in prosperity counselling thee, in trials succouring thee, in life guiding thee, in death comforting thee. Rejoice in Christ thy Lord.

ISAIAH XXXIII. 24.

I am sick.

AND why ? Because I am a sinner. No sin, no sorrow. But is there any sorrow for sin, and what is it ? that which arises merely from pain ? Fruitless sorrow this, which does not pacify conscience, or silence the mind into submission. What is it ? that which arises from a view of sin as an evil committed against God ? Bless the Lord, O my soul, that he hath given thee this view of thy sins ; that he is working in thee that godly † sorrow which, in his grace, worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. Art thou looking unto Christ the great atonement ? is he precious as a Saviour, lovely as a Redeemer, friendly as thine advocate with the Father ? What ‡ hath God wrought ? and what art thou wondering at ? the Father's love, the Son's grace, the Spirit's teaching, in pardoning thy sins ? Asto-

* Jer. iii. 22.

† 2 Cor. vii. 10.

‡ Num. xxiii. 23.

nishing mercy, amazing pity, love unknown !
 I am sick : let thy chastisement humble me more,
 abase me more, and draw my affections more to
 thee. I am sick : is it of the world and its va-
 nities ? May this sickness be unto death ; and do
 thou, Lord, comfort me with thy consolations
 poured into my soul ; feed my soul with the finest
 of the wheat ; and with honey out of the rock
 Christ Jesus sustain me. But am I sick of myself
 as a sinner, and of the world as lying in wicked-
 ness ? Lord increase this sickness in me, and in-
 crease my faith in thee ; and bring me to that
 region of eternal happiness where * the inhabitant
 shall not say, I am sick. Jesus is the health and
 life of the soul : it is he who says, I will † bring
 it health and a cure, and reveal the abundance of
 peace and truth. To him give all the prophets
 witness : he is the tree of life, the almighty phy-
 sician ; his blood heals the wounds sin hath made.
 O holy Spirit, witness to my spirit that this Jesus
 is my physician, my health in sickness, my riches
 in poverty, my life in death, my all in eternity.

* Isa. xxxiii. 24.

† Jer. xxxiii. 6.

of John

LUKE XXIII. 12.

*The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends,
for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

HOW violent the enmity of the human heart to Christ ! how ready to join even with those it hates in persecuting Christ and his people ! Is this the character of others, and not of myself ? No, it is my character, even mine ; when walking without the light of the gospel thick darkness covered my understanding, and ignorance was my name. A stranger to myself, and to the power of divine truth, I walked * in darkness, not knowing whither I was going. I desired not to be holy because God was holy, but merely to pacify the clamours of an accusing conscience ; and though sin was my delight, and morality my aversion, yet these two were made friends to join against Christ, and put him to death by crucifying † the Son of God afresh. My poor morality was not less against Christ than my sin : it was taking the crown from Christ's head to put it upon my own ; and my proud heart cried, if I cannot save myself, Christ I am sure cannot save me. What atheism reigns naturally in the heart of man : he lives without ‡ God in the world, and glorying in self, shews how far he is fallen from that righteousness in which he was made. But do these

* John xii. 35.

† Heb. vi. 6.

‡ Ephes. ii. 12.

enemies to Christ and to my peace now reign? God forbid! Thou, even thou, whose love* is from everlasting, hast drawn me to thyself; thy † power hath made me willing. I feel, I lament the opposition I made against Christ and his finished salvation; I feel and I mourn the struggles of these two enemies within me: yet though they have had the dominion over me, now by ‡ thee only will I make mention of thy name. Rejoice, O my soul, in Christ Jesus, thy sacrifice for sin, thy righteousness for justification, divinely appointed, revealed, and freely given.

MATTHEW VIII. 3.

I will — be thou clean.

THE voice of grace, mercy and peace; but to whom? to the self-righteous, who are clean in their own eyes? No; this would be a contradiction. Who is the speaker? Christ; he who says, he § came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Sin is compared to a leprosy; every unregenerate sinner is a leper, whether he feels it or not. It is a disorder which spreads over and contaminates the whole man; he dwells as it were in a separate house, he is at a distance from God. Can such an one be cleansed and be brought

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

† Psalm cx. 3.

‡ Isa. xxvi. 13.

§ Matt. ix. 13.

nigh unto God? Yes, through the blood of Christ; that blood which speaketh God merciful; that blood which speaketh Christ gracious; that blood which, applied by the Spirit, and apprehended by faith, cleanseth* from all sin. O Lord, what am I? by nature unclean, by practice filthy. Thou hast brought me to a sense of my malady; thou hast given me an hope that thou hast said to leprous me, "I will—be thou clean." O the rich mercy, sovereign grace, unbounded love of my God—"I will—be thou clean." Lord, I believe thy mercy, grace, and love; but sin distresses me, corruption perplexes me. O my soul, say, is sin crucified and dying? is it thy burden, grief, and sorrow? is it bitter in the communion? painful on reflection? Fly to the cross; fly to the fountain, wash, and be clean. Grace abounds; God's mercy † endureth for ever:—I am ‡ God, I change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Lord, what am I, that thou shouldst thus address thyself to a poor worm, who feels that when he would do good evil is present with him! Enable me to rejoice in Christ the Lord, who healeth me.

* 1 John i. 7.

† Psalm cxxxvi. 1, and all.

‡ Mal. iii. 6.

SOLOMON'S SONG V. 16.

He is altogether lovely.

IT is Jesus, my Saviour and my God, who is altogether lovely. Fairer * than the children of men, grace is poured into his lips, therefore God hath blessed him for ever. He is lovely as God and man, one Christ, able † and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He is lovely in his disposition: he invites sin-burdened sinners to come unto him—Come ‡ unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; as if he had said, keep not at a distance under an apprehension of my vengeance, but come to one who from his very disposition is ready to receive you. Thus as a prophet my Saviour is lovely, for there is none teacheth like him: as a priest who has offered up himself for a sacrifice he is lovely; as he is also in his regal office, his sceptre is a sceptre of love. He is also a merciful and compassionate high-priest, who hath a feeling for his people; he ever liveth and intercedeth for them. He is altogether lovely, for he is the God of love—God § is love. But to whom is Christ thus lovely? to the men of the world, the fashionable circle, the gay, the licentious? No; they || see no form nor comeliness

* Psalm xlv. 2.

† Heb. vii. 25.

‡ Matt. xi. 28.

§ 1 John iv. 8.

|| Isa. l. 1.

in him ; they do not desire him. Is it to the refined reasoner, the polite scholar, or the man of science, that he is lovely ? No ; they are so dazzled with the imaginary splendor of their attainments, that they can see nothing lovely in Christ. Is it to the careless, the profligate, and the abandoned ? No ; they love sin, and live in that element, the air of which is so thick it obscures the sun of righteousness. Yet there are to whom Christ is altogether lovely, to sensible sinners, who see all suitableness and all-sufficiency in him. Humble sinners love Christ, because he hath put them out of conceit with themselves ; Spirit-taught sinners love Christ, because the Spirit hath revealed * him in them. Such is my beloved : he is altogether lovely. Lord, shed † abroad thy love in my heart, that I may love thee more.

GENESIS XXV. 22.

Why am I thus ?

SALVATION by Christ is the admiration of angels : much more so should it be of those who are the subjects of it. There ‡ is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth : surely he who is that repentant must rejoice. But am I a repenting sinner ? am I a subject of divine grace ?

* Gal. i. 16.

† Rom. v. 5.

‡ Luke xv. 7.

if so, why do I feel inclination opposing inclination? would not all be calm and serene within? whereas I find all in opposition, each contending, each struggling for the mastery. Why am I thus? why does thought struggle with thought? desire with desire? what I hate with what I love? Alas! woe* is me! I dwell in the tents of Mesek, among the inhabitants of Kedar. Why am I thus? where shall I get a satisfactory answer? and how shall I obtain relief? Sin pesters me, and I hate it; evil imaginations arise in my heart, and they are a burden too heavy for me to bear: I do what I hate; I omit doing that I love. Whence this contention? Let me enquire of the Lord. His word says, "Two † nations are in thy womb; the one shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger." How does this apply to me? what says the apostle hereon? The ‡ flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh:—these are contrary the one to the other. I find § a law in my members warring against the law in my mind. Corrupt nature is the elder, brought into this world with me, derived from fallen Adam, and so properly denominated the old man—"The || old man which is corrupt." Grace is the younger, the gift of God in Christ in rege-

* Psalm cxx. 5.

† Gen. xxv. 23.

‡ Gal. v. 17.

§ Rom. vii. 23.

|| Ephes. iv. 22.

neration. Grant to me, Lord, that I may find the elder serving the younger; that under all opposition from the flesh I may be enabled by thy grace to resist, to * mortify my corrupt members—to cleave to and depend upon the God of my salvation.

LUKE II. 10.

I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

O YE messengers of the great God; happy are ye his ministering servants, who are always fulfilling his pleasure! Are ye interested in the salvation of sinners of a different rank from yourselves? delight ye in announcing good tidings to sinful mankind? O Lord, how good, compassionate, and merciful art thou! With holy wonder let me admire thy goodness, while I participate in that joy which thou dost give! Salvation proclaimed to the lost and miserable is, when received and apprehended by faith, the cause of great joy. Christ is the God of salvation, the † author and finisher of faith, the ‡ Alpha and Omega in redemption work; in him God § is well pleased with sinners for his righteousness sake; in him God becomes reconciled to sinners; in

* Col. iii. 5.

† Heb. xii. 2.

‡ Rev. i. 8.

§ Isa. xlii. 22.

him God is merciful; in him God is love. O soul, what art thou? a spiritual essence. What is thy state naturally? that* of death in trespasses and sins. Sinner, what art thou? A rebel to thy God, a traitor to thine almighty king. In what art thou confiding? on what art thou building for eternity? thine own performances? thine own righteousness? Alas, how ignorant art thou! thy righteousnesses† are as filthy rags. But you are crying, God is merciful; but know you not he is also holy and just? Perhaps you are crying peace to yourself from comparative godliness. Ah, self-deceiver! because you are not so bad as others, must it therefore follow that you are good in the eye of the Lord. Are you a sinner, feeling that you are poor‡ and miserable, and blind and naked? The angels announce to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. Believe §, and thou shalt be saved.

JOB XXII. 12.

Heaven.

WHAT art thou? A place of holiness and of happiness; the place of God's more immediate presence, where the cherubim and seraphim rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy,

* Ephes. ii. 1.

† Isa. lxiv. 6.

‡ Rev. iii. 17.

§ Acts xvi. 31.

holy, Lord God of Hosts. When the prophet was honoured with a vision of God, what says he? Mine * eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts. What were his feelings? Woe is me, I am undone, a man of unclean lips! Lord, let me examine myself. What am I, and what is my soul? is heaven the haven where it longs to be at rest? Art thou, soul, convinced God has inscribed vanity on all things here below? art thou weary of the world, because of its vanities, its abounding iniquities? art thou weary of carnal self; because when you would do good evil is present with you? art thou hungering † and thirsting after the kingdom of God and his righteousness? is Christ precious to thee as thy Saviour from the guilt of sin, and, if possible, more precious as thy Saviour from the dominion of sin? art thou desiring conformity to the image of Christ? is thy desire to him as thy best beloved, yea, as altogether lovely? wouldst thou rather suffer ‡ affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? and art thou longing § to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? Then heaven is as certainly thine everlasting residence as if thou wert already in it: —Where || I am, says Christ, there shall my servant be. Fear not, nor be dismayed; thou lovest Christ, and Christ loves thee; thou longest to be

* Isa. vi. 5.

† Matt. v. 6.

‡ Heb. xi. 25.

§ Phil. i. 23.

|| John xii. 26.

with Christ, and Christ says thou shalt be with him for ever. Wait the Lord's time for thy dismission from the body; fulfil his good pleasure towards thee Christ certainly will; he * will perfect that which concerneth thee: heaven shall be thine everlasting home.

2 KINGS IX. 5.

I have an errand to thee.

ALL nature speaks to man, and calls upon him to consider God. The sun rising from the chambers of the east, and illuminating the hemisphere, addresses man, and says, I have an errand to thee—I rise, I set; you have risen into life, you must set in death. It says, I fulfil the will of him who made me by his power and in his wisdom; you, made by the same power and wisdom, ought also to be performing the will of your Creator. What I the sun am in the firmament of the heavens, that Jesus, the sun of righteousness, is in the firmament of the covenant of grace; he gives light, communicates and cherishes life. By my shining, objects are discovered which before were concealed, because there was no light: when the sun of righteousness illuminates the understanding, discoveries of the most important nature are made—sin, guilt, and pollution are seen; and hereby the soul is humbled, sighs

* Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

for relief from the oppressive burden under which it lies ; and Christ, by the light which he gives, discovers himself to be a brother* born for adversity, and standing ready to receive all that come unto him, without any distinction of persons, as the sun shines upon rich and poor, young and old, sick and healthy. I the sun cause vegetation to thrive by that genial warmth which I communicate unto the earth ; so Jesus, shining into the soul, with † healing in his beams, revives the graces of his own Spirit, so that they bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit ; or the divine seed, sown in the heart, brings forth first ‡ the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

PSALM CXVI. 7.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul !

HOW is man busied about the trifles of this world ; walking § in a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain ; seeking happiness, and meeting disappointment. Have not I been of the number ? and hast not thou, O my soul, been pursuing a phantom ? Why is it thou are busied in a different way ? where art thou resting, and to what art thou looking for satisfaction ? Is it

* Prov. xvii. 17.

† Mark iv. 28.

‡ Mal. iv. 2.

§ Psalm xxxix. 6.

riches? They * make themselves wings, and fly away. Is it worldly fame? It is like a weather-cock, seldom long in one point. But where am I? In a world of folly, sin, and misery. What am I? A sinner. What is my desire? Christ, and his salvation. I have tried the world, and found it deceitful; I have tried friends, professing themselves such, and I have found them unfaithful; but the small experiment I have made of Christ, under scripture warrant, is proof of his infinite value. Soul, art thou troubled from thyself, and for thyself? Christ is a refuge † in the time of trouble. Does the world frown upon and persecute thee? Christ is that ‡ friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Hast thou been wandering from Christ, and dost thou find all thy refuges fail? Return unto thy rest, unto thy Christ, O my soul. What a rest is Christ! full of grace and mercy; a rest for weary sinners; a rest for sin-sick sinners; a rest for mourning sinners; a rest for rejoicing sinners; a glorious rest; for glory shall be to them that rest on him—In § returning and rest shall ye be saved. O for a living faith on this life-giving stone, this sure foundation, this sure resting place. Lord, grant that I may be always coming || up out of this wilderness, leaning upon Christ my eternal rest.

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

§ Isa. xxx. 15.

† Psalm lix. 16.

|| Song viii. 5.

‡ Prov. xviii. 24.

What shall be the end of these things?

A QUESTION of no small moment, which the sons and daughters of Adam should frequently put to themselves. What is my pursuit, aim, and endeavour? is it pleasure, carnal gratification, and sensual indulgence? What shall the end be? As she * that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth, so he who is pursuing these will find the wages to be death: for the wages of sin is death. Am I under the influence of self-importance, relying on my duties as passports to Immanuel's everlasting land? what shall the end be? Vexation and disappointment; since Christ says to such, Where † I am there you cannot come. But am I relying upon Christ for grace and mercy, and upon my improvement of grace given? Alas! what must the end of these things be? Anguish of spirit; for Christ § is the alone end of the law for righteousness; and he hath wove that garment of salvation which stands in no need of my patches; and my righteousnesses || are as filthy rags. Am I professing to believe the gospel, to look to Christ for my salvation, and rely upon him for my redemption, and yet living

* 1 Tim. v. 6.

§ Rom. x. 4.

† Rom. vi. 23

|| Isa. lxiv. 6.

‡ John vii. 34.

to the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof? and to the world countenancing its ways, by my walking in them? what shall be the end? but that of the hypocrites portion, eternal disappointment. Am I deceiving myself, and having a name to live through external profession, and yet am dead in the sight of God? what will the end be? External loss. Not * every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Self deception, how fatal!

DANIEL XII. 8.

What shall be the end of these things?

O MY soul, how important thy concerns! how needful for thy present peace, to be assured thou art going on in a way that will have a prosperous issue. Let me enquire concerning thee. Art thou blessed with the † true circumcision of the spirit, so that thou hast no confidence in the flesh? art thou glorying in Christ, as the Lord, thy righteousness and strength? art thou worshipping the Lord, thy Creator, in spirit and in truth? art thou glorifying God in life and conversation, endeavouring to walk even as Christ thy Saviour walked? What shall be the end of these things?

* Matt. vii. 21.

† Phil. iii. 3.

but that while further communications of grace and strength are poured into thee, thou shalt grow up more into the image and likeness of Christ, and this shall terminate in thy being everlastingly with him. Art thou mourning for sin, * sighing for the abominations of the land? Is Christ thy all, and God's service thy delight? Under an experience † of God's love, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given unto thee, art thou loathing self, and walking humbly before God? The end of these things shall be an eternal abode in that place where the voice of mourning is never heard; thou shalt enjoy freedom from the existence of sin in thee; freedom from the blasphemies of the wicked; freedom in the uninterrupted service of God in that holy temple where ‡ Christ is the light thereof, thou shalt enjoy the perpetual presence of thy Redeemer. Beloved §, (says the apostle to his brethren in the Lord,) *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is—O my soul, be looking and waiting for Christ's second coming.

* Ezek. ix. 4.

† Rev. xxi. 23.

‡ Rom. v. 5.

§ 1 John iii. 2.

JEREMIAH X. 7.

Who would not fear Thee, O King of Nations!

THE majesty and power of Jehovah will, at one time or another, strike the sinner with awe, and fill his mind with apprehension. A slavish fear of God mankind naturally possess—they are admonished by conscience, and by it condemned for not fulfilling its admonitions. A general idea of the power and glory of that God who is jealous of his own honour, cherishes this slavish fear in the mind; yet man resists conscience, tries to get rid of this fear, and runs again into sin. But, who is the man that hath done this? is it he who last week justly suffered the sentence of the law of his country, and previous to his execution confessed the fact for which he was condemned? rather, is it not every man that hath acted thus? is it not I? Yes, conscience whispers, *thou art the man. Consider then, O my soul, what thou hast done for thyself; does not the declaration apply to thee—O Israel †, thou hast destroyed thyself? it does—I am guilty—Must I not fear Thee, O King of nations? must I not dread thy power, O King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? As a sinner, I have reason to fear thy justice, because I have armed it against myself, by voluntary transgressions of thy law—

* 2 Sam. xii. 7.

† Hof. xiii. 9.

But * mercy rejoiceth against judgment, that mercy thou hast manifested to me in Christ Jesus, by whom thy justice is satisfied. I desire to fear Thee as my God and Father—my God of Love, who hast manifested thy love, by implanting thy fear within me, which led me to Christ for salvation, enabled me to fly to him as my refuge, and to trust in him my complete redemption—even so, Father; for thus it seemed good in thy grace to deal with me.

MATTHEW XXII. 42. 197

What think ye of Christ?

UPON our right thinking of Christ our present happiness depends; to think rightly of him, we must know him, and to know him we must be taught by the Spirit. The promise is, all † thy children shall be taught of the Lord. The Spirit teacheth us, that Christ fulfilled all righteousness; that he died, ‡ the just for the unjust; that he is God the Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate. But what do I think of Christ? That § there is none like him, for there is none other name given to man, through whom salvation may be obtained; that he took our nature—died in that nature, || that he might destroy him who

* James ii. 13.

§ Acts iv. 12.

† Isa. liv. 13.

|| Heb. ii. 14.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Had the power of death, that is the devil ; that he triumphed over him openly, when he led captivity captive ; and that he ever liveth the advocate of his people, interceding for them. Yet, O my soul, thou didst not always think thus of Christ ; once thou thoughtest not of him ; thou didst not see excellency in him ; partookest not of his grace, wast in darkness ; but he who said, let * there be light, and there was light, shined into my understanding, discovered myself to myself, and thereby destroyed all hope in myself ; I saw justification must be by a sinless obedience of the law, and now my proud heart became humbled, and I was made willing to receive salvation as God's gift. I saw in the word, Christ the Divine Prophet, Priest, and King appointed of the Father. I came under divine drawings for teaching. I came to Christ, my sacrifice for sin, and surrendered to his power ; I found him precious to my soul, as my righteousness and atonement, and my all. Let me ever think highly of Christ, be always glorying in this Lord. Let the question, What think you of Christ ? be always upon my mind, that I may be giving up all for him, who is my Saviour and my God.

* Gen. i. 3.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord.

LORD, give me faith to do it, and I shall do it. But what is my burden? Sin stirring within me, working in my members, and warring against my peace, comfort, and joy—what corruption within, what temptation without! I see this day, that if God had banished me into hell the very day I was born, he would have been just, so exceeding polluted is that nature which I inherit from Adam. By * nature I am a child of wrath, I † was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Who ‡ can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? It is this corrupt nature which works within me; I feel pride rising; fretfulness stirring; impatience working; anger exciting to speak unadvisedly with my lips. Thou, O Lord, knowest this is my burden, because thou, even thou hast made it so. And what shall I do, and where, and how shall I obtain relief? Cast thy burden upon the Lord—What, Jesus, art thou thus inviting and commanding? art thou thus compassionating and friendly? Yes, it is thou who sayest to every burthened soul longing for deliverance, cast thy burden upon the Lord: O, what tenderness, compassion, and love! how gracious the invitation, how full of love the com-

* Ephes. ii. 3.

† Psalm li. 5.

‡ Job xiv. 4.

mand! My heart does know its own bitterness—I feel the plague of it, and it is my burden that I cannot love my God more, and serve him better. A little matter bestirs my pride, and I swell like a toad. Disappointment excites impatience, I feel, I mourn that it is thus, because God is dishonoured, and I bring guilt upon my soul. Yet I will join with the sweet singer of Israel. Why * art thou cast down, O my soul? cast thy burden on the Lord, and I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.

MICAH II. 10.

This is not your rest.

EVERY thing in nature and providence enforces this on the mind of man; the constant changes of the seasons; the revolutions that take place in the world; the prevalence of wickedness; noxious men, and noxious animals, all cry, this is not your rest; all speak to the considering, meditating, enlightened mind. God made nothing in vain; no circumstance takes place accidentally; the hand, the voice of God, is to be seen and heard in every thing. The disorders in the world, the jarring elements, beasts, birds, and fishes of prey; the rich wallowing in sin, and the poor

* Psalm xlii. 11.

servants of God despised and afflicted, all proclaim to man, this is not your rest; here you have * no continuing city; and the servant of Christ replies, † I lothe it, I would not live here always. The biting of an insect, the barking of a dog, the timid animal flying my approach, alike convince me that I am a sinner, and that this is not my rest. Can there be rest where there is perpetual change? In my duties the same conviction forces itself upon my mind, viz. Thoughts wandering; pride rising; coldness prevailing; temptations assailing; fears and doubts existing, all unite in crying, this is not your rest. O my soul, how art thou acting under these feelings? art thou, under divine instruction, led to seek for thy rest in Christ Jesus, and waiting for that eternal rest which is in him? O all-sufficient Saviour, in thee the weary find rest, and with thee, thy disciples shall ever rest. Let me never rest satisfied but in thee; bear me on the wings of thine everlasting love and mercy, to the joyful land of everlasting rest; enable me to glory in Christ; and let me at all times find the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world, amen, even so, Lord Jesus.

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† Job vii. 16.

HOSEA III. P.

Beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress.

THE character is mine; what reason for humility? at one time my heart glows with love of Christ; soon my affection seems straying; and I lose sight of him whom my soul loveth; coldness seizes my spirit, my soul is benumbed with the stupor of insensibility; spiritual life appears decaying; some idol engages my attention; the enemy knows what worm is likely to catch; I nibble, I bite, and become an easy prey. This is my weakness, and my sin, drawn out of my element of spiritual love and duty, I faint, I mourn. But is Christ my friend, and am I loved of him? Has he discovered his love, his grace to my soul? Ah me! a poor inconstant! beloved of Christ, the son of God; plucked by him the eternal God, a brand out of the fire; enlightened into his truth; quickened in my soul; receiving fresh manifestations of his love, and fresh communications of his grace, and yet an adulteress! going after other lovers! Lord, what is man! and what am I! It must be of thy * mercy that I am not consumed, and because thy compassions fail not. But am I beloved of Christ the Saviour? what proof hath he given thereof? has he not died for sinners? did he not die for me? Astonishing in-

* Lam. iii. 22.

stance of divine love ! Is he not leading me, now that he hath recovered me out of the hands of the enemy, * in a right way to the city of my heavenly habitation ? O then what a friend is Christ to me ! how often does he appear for me, and manifest his grace and mercy to me ? He counsels me in his wisdom ; † hedges up my way ; convinces me of my sin ; leads me to the fountain of his blood ; gives me faith in himself ; and ‡ heals my backslidings, because he is married unto me.

PHILIPPIANS III. 9.

And be found in him.

HAPPY § are the people that are in such a state ; yea, blessed are they who have this Lord for their God. Be found in him, in Christ the Lord ; in him as the branch in the vine ; mysterious union, effected by the powerful operation of God the Spirit ; desirable, because everlastingly beneficial. In Christ ? then not in a state of alienation from God ; not || an alien from the commonwealth of Israel ; not in bondage to sin ; not ¶ in love with the weak and beggarly elements of this world ; not in love with self ; not a citizen of the world, but a citizen of Zion.

* Psalm cvii. 7.

§ Psalm cxliv. 15.

† Hos. ii. 6.

|| Ephes. ii. 12.

‡ Jer. iii. 14.

¶ Col. ii. 20.

O soul, dost see what Christ is to them who are savingly united unto him? who are * taken out of the wild olive tree, and engrafted into him? are they accepted of God because found in Christ? shall they enjoy many peculiar and good privileges in time, because they are in Christ? shall they die in the Lord Christ? and shall they, because risen in Christ, dwell with him in eternity? Surely then thou must be anxious to know, that thou art one with Christ, by a spiritual marriage, a spiritual union, which is marvellous, yet indissoluble. Dost thou see, feel, and lament thy vileness? hast thou increasing views of the evil of sin? art thou mourning thine unbelief? art thou waiting at wisdom's doors? ceasing from doing evil, renouncing self-confidence, giving up thy works, thy name, thy reputation, and willing to be accounted † a fool, so that thou mayest be wise in Christ? is Christ in thy estimation of him more desirable than thousands of gold and silver? is it thus with thee, and how came it to be so? But because he who maketh all things new, hath created thee again in Christ Jesus, and manifested to thee thine acceptance with God the Father, so that thou canst set thy seal to this scripture, sanctified ‡ by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus and called.

* Rom. xi. 17.

† 1 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ Jude 1.

The sun of righteousness.

WHAT mercies, O my God, art thou pouring down upon us sinners; how hast thou appeared in the time of our extremity! The sun shines, the corn ripens, the harvest is going on, the crops are abundant, and thou the God of providence art proving thyself to be the God of grace; thou * crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy clouds drop fatness; thou art the God of grace; Jesus, thy sun of righteousness, hath arisen upon a dark world; hath arisen upon dark sinners; by his light discovering the evil of sin, in requiring so great a sacrifice; thou displayest thy love to sinners in him thine unspeakable great gift; he shines into, and on the soul, by his reviving rays, and by the showers of thy grace, the seed of thy word takes root, and grows; first † the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Has this sun arisen upon me? am I honoured of the Lord, as one of his husbandmen, sowing the seed of his word? Surely I must say, what ‡ hath God wrought? and what am I and my father's house, that God should deal thus mercifully with me? Glorious Jesus, shine more powerfully into my soul; warm with thy beams my heart, with a sense of the Father's everlasting

* Psalm lxxv. 11.

† Mark iv. 28.

‡ Num. xxiii. 23.

love to me a sinner; and while I view thee the bleeding sacrifice; let me see my sin to be exceeding sinful; while thou dost enable me to flee to thee, the great atonement, let me feel the consolations of thy spirit abounding in my soul. Lord manifest thy power, in working by a weak instrument; enable me, who am indeed * less than the least of all saints, to sow the pure seed of thy word with greater diligence, waiting thy blessing that it may grow, and be fruitful to thy praise. By thy grace I will make mention of thy righteousness only.

I'll point to my Redeemer's blood,
And say, behold the way to God.

EXODUS XX. 5.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.

WHAT clearer proof of darkness on the mind of man, than his exalting himself at the expence of God's glory; and yet is he not constantly doing thus? One is vaunting of the dignity of human nature, as if mankind were a superior set of beings, independent of God, and herein he is setting up his puny judgment against that of his Maker, who declares of such beings, there † is none that doeth good, no, not one.

* Ephes. iii. 18.

† Psalm liii. 3.

Another boasts of the rectitude of his will, and the uprightness of his disposition, and is puffed up with his imaginary excelling virtue; but God, who made man perfect, declares of him, as a fallen creature, and of those born of him, that the * imagination of man's heart is only evil, and that continually. And where is the rectitude of that will which is in opposition to the will of God? or the uprightness of that disposition which is dissatisfied with the dispensations of the Almighty? Another is looking to himself, and cries, I have a good heart; but where is the goodness of that heart, which God the searcher of hearts, declares to be † deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? A fourth looks to his dealings, his duties, his works, and cries; Aha ‡, I am warm, these are my confidence, my armour, my all! Alas, poor self and Satan deluded mortal! can God be thy debtor? art thou not taking to thyself that glory which belongs only to God, who is a jealous God, and will § not give his glory to another. The foregoing arguings heretofore prevailed in my mind. Who hath made me to differ ||, but God who is rich in mercy, and abundant in goodness? To thee, O Lord God, Father, Son, and Spirit, be all the glory of my salvation. Keep me, by thy grace, from look-

* Gen. vi. 5.
§ Isa. xlii. 8.

† Jer. xvii. 9.
|| Ephes. ii. 4.

‡ Isa. xlv. 16.

ing to, or having any confidence in an arm of flesh ; let me be depending upon thee to work * in me to will, and to do of thy good pleasure, that I may be working out my salvation with fear and trembling.

ROMANS XVI. 20.

The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

HOW full of trouble is the renewed soul under the galling suggestions of Satan ! how short is time, when compared with eternity ! how full of comfort the title here appropriated to God ! the God of Peace—how ? Through the atonement made by the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. The God of Peace—when ? When He shews a reconciled face to sinners, who turn to him and approach him through Jesus Christ ; who by faith, the gift of God, are trusting to, and relying on Christ for salvation. Jesus is this God of Peace ; not only as effecting peace between God and man, but as bringing peace into the conscience, through the revelation of his spirit. Does my conscience testify against me, and joining with the law of God condemn me as a transgressor ? The Spirit in his word reveals Christ the law-fulfiller ; by the same word works faith in me, whereby I fly to Christ,

* Phil. ii. 12.

as fulfilling all righteousness for me; and being* justified by faith, I have peace with God, through Jesus Christ my Lord; and he who being the † seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head, will, in his own time, bruise Satan that serpent under my feet shortly. Let me then be always mixing faith with this precious word of promise, and rely on him, who will finally make me more than a conqueror. Let me, under every assault of, every conflict with Satan, remember who is on my side, and that my ‡ light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Lord, do thou hold me up, and I shall be safe.

HEBREWS XII. 2.

Looking unto Jesus.

HOW gracious the command §, look unto me! how full of comfort compliance with it! Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus direct and counsel him! where have I been looking for peace, comfort, and happiness? but to the world, sin, and barren ordinances! truly they are dry breasts, there is no refreshing milk of consolation to be drawn thence; nothing there but what

* Rom. v. 1.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ Gen. iii. 15.

§ Isa. xlv. 22.

brings disappointment and pain. But where am I looking now, and to whom? Lord, I can appeal to thee, that though my eyes are dim, I am, through thy grace, looking unto Jesus, in whom thou hast convinced me there is beauty and all excellency. Thou hast condescended to become my teacher, and I am persuaded there is none teacheth like thee. But what am I looking unto Jesus for? The grace of repentance; the pardon of sin; the consolation of my mind; and looking to him my everlasting prize. My prayer to Christ is, for that * godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; for the pardon of my sins of thought, as well as of word and deed; that my mind being endued by him with peace, I may be running † my race with patience; Jesus, Lord, I am looking unto thee, poor as I am, for the riches of thy grace; naked, as I have made myself, for thy garment of salvation, thy robe of righteousness; weak as I feel myself, for strength out of thy fulness; I am looking to thee for the continual operation of thy spirit, that I may be growing up into thine ‡ image from glory to glory.

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

† Heb. xii. 1.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

SATAN is whispering, what warrant have you such a vile sinner, such a proud sinner, such a filthy polluted sinner, for looking unto Christ? Satan, I know something of thy devices; is not this word of God my warrant? look unto me, and be ye saved*, for I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. To thee, O Jesus, will I look for the forgiveness of my sins, for grace by thy grace and strength to fight† the good fight of faith; on thee I am looking, knowing how vile I am, for cleansing; I fly to the fountain of thy blood, which cleanseth‡ from all sin; I look to thy faithfulness, while I rely upon thy power, for meekness, patience, forbearance, and love; I look unto thee for humility, peace, and joy; for comfort through life; support in death; and glory in eternity. Do thou, gracious Saviour, look upon me; lift § up the light of thy countenance upon me, and I shall be whole; cause ¶ thy face to shine upon me, and I shall be saved; fill my soul with love of thee; fill my heart with grace in thee; fill my spirit with thy spirit. I look to thee, O my Saviour, for salvation from my sins; to thee, my Redeemer, for redemption from the

* Matt. ix. 13.

§ Psalm iv. 6.

† 1 Tim. vi. 12.

¶ Psalm lxxx. 3.

‡ 1 John i. 7.

curse of thy law; to thee, my Mediator and Advocate, for acceptance with the Father. Thou art the altar * upon which I offer up my sacrifice of prayer and praise, looking for acceptance through thy gracious presentation of them unto my heavenly Father, and through thy no less gracious intercession. My sinful nature, my hard heart, my hasty spirit, my coldness, and my great insensibility, make me look unto thee.

PSALM XII. 1.

Help, Lord!

Weaker than a bruised reed,
Help I every moment need.

29 Jan

AND O the astonishing goodness of God in the provision made in that covenant † of grace, which is in all things well ordered and sure! help ‡ laid upon one that is mighty; one chosen from among the people; one who is a merciful and compassionate high priest; one who knows how to § succour them that are tempted. How suited to my feelings and the distress of my mind is this prayer of David. Alas! my corrupt nature is like the fountain bubbling up bitter waters, constantly bubbling up sin. How little a circumstance stirs the spring, and makes the waters

* Heb. xiii. 10.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

‡ Psalm lxxxix. 19.

§ Heb. ii. 18.

muddy? how soon is my pride hurt? how quickly do I speak unadvisedly with my lips? Every day I am more convinced of my weakness and ignorance, the deceitfulness of my heart, the perverseness of my will. Can such an one be a brand plucked out of the burning, be a disciple of Christ? O Lord, thou knowest, and thou seest me humbled and abased before thee, mourning my corrupt nature, the resistance of my will, the hastiness of my spirit. This is the work of thy Spirit, and I praise thee for it. Help, Lord, a poor helpless sinner! strengthen a poor weak sinner! Pardon, O thou atoning Saviour, a poor guilty sinner! Comfort, O thou Holy Spirit, a poor sorrowing sinner! O my Father God, look upon the face of thine Anointed, and forgive a poor broken-hearted sinner! Heal, thou God of grace, my manifold backslidings, and help me, Lord, for the time to come! bless me with a spirit of meekness, and beautify * me with thy salvation! Help, Lord, against all mine enemies! help me to read thy word, to meditate upon it, and to bring it forth into practice in my life and conversation; to put † on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of my God, of great price! help me to exercise faith upon the eternal word, upon the revealed word; to walk uprightly, humbly, faithfully! help me against myself!

* Psalm cxlix. 4.

†: 1 Pet. iii. 4.

30 Jun

PSALM III. 5.

*I laid me down and slept : I awaked, for the Lord
sustained me.*

O THOU watchful guardian of my sleeping hours, what shall I render unto thee for thy mercies renewed unto me every morning, vouchsafed unto me every moment? O give me a grateful heart, that I may bring my tribute of praise unto my Lord! Glory be unto thee, O God, for sustaining me through the night! How many have spent the hours of darkness under the power of the prince of darkness? how many who have lived without God in the world have died in enmity with him? how many have spent the night upon beds of languishing, their bodies racked with pain, their souls agonizing with the fear of death, filled with terror at the thoughts of appearing before that God whose honour they have insulted, whose mercy they have rejected! And why is it that I have spent the night comfortably in sweet refreshing sleep, in some meditations on my God? O the boundings of grace, mercy, and peace, unto me a sinner! How art thou affected, O my soul! art thou more convinced that God is the alone supreme Good? art thou more determined on the Lord's side? feelest thou thyself utterly unworthy of thy Lord's mercy? thou hast existed another night in time, thou art con-

frequently so much nearer eternity : the night of death is hastening, the shadows * of the evening are stretched out—there are grey† hairs upon thee : dost thou consider this ? art thou a partaker of divine grace, living by faith to the glory of God ? soon thou shalt wake in eternity, to be for ever with the Ancient ‡ of Days, and with songs of everlasting praise shall triumph in redeeming love, ascribing glory to God in the highest strains.

EPHESIANS II. 5. 312

By grace are ye saved.

THEN what hath man to boast of ? How free and how full is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ! free—for whosoever § will may come and take of the water of life freely ; full—for it abounds to the vilest of sinners, who will take it freely : Whosoever cometh || unto me, says the Saviour, I will in no wise cast out. It is inexhaustible grace, for the mercy ¶ of the Lord endureth for ever. The appointment of the Son to be the Redeemer of sinners was free on the part of the Father ; the work of salvation, as accomplished by Christ, was the performance of a voluntary undertaking ; the Spirit's enlightening and

* Jer. vi. 4.

† Hof. vii. 9.

‡ Dan. vii. 9.

§ Rev. xxii. 17.

|| John v. 37.

¶ Ps. cxxxvi. passim.

enlivening the sinner, and bringing this salvation into his soul, is free. O the depth of divine love, the extent of divine grace, in saving sinners, in their being accepted of God in Christ, and in their being restored to the divine favour ! By grace are ye saved—free, rich, sovereign grace—even the * grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Come then with me, my fellow sinner, to this only source of true comfort; come with me, however vile, to the ever-flowing fountain which cleanseth from all sin: here is a remedy extensive as thy disease; here is blood of infinite value; here is balm to heal all thy wounds. Oh ! stand not doubting whether thou mayest come, but fly for thy life to Christ, the alone propitiatory sacrifice : he invites you, declaring you shall not meet with a refusal : Saul of Tarsus, Mary Magdalen, and millions join in one cry, “ Come to Jesus,” he saved us, he stands ready to save you.” By grace—remember that word ; By grace are ye saved. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, invite you ; holy angels are looking upon you, that they may rejoice in your admission into the family of God. Kiss † the Son, bow to the sceptre of his love ; salvation is by him, and from him freely—all is of grace : he is the gift of God, in whom is eternal life : he is able, for he is almighty, and willing, for he bids you come ; you are not too poor, nor too vile for

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

† Psalm ii. 12.

him to enrich and pardon you: he says, "By grace are ye saved."

NEHEMIAH IV. 10.

The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed; and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.

WHAT a just description is this of man, of myself, devoid of strength, and incapable of removing the rubbish of a sinful carnal heart of unbelief. How can I build-in, and of myself, that obedience which will justify me, and behind which I shall be in a state of security from mine enemies? How can he, whose locks have been shorn through his own folly, contend with that enemy into whose power he hath sinfully betrayed himself? When I say I will arise and shake* myself, alas! I find my strength gone, and I have neither power nor might against my foes. What is man but weakness! what is the natural inclination, disposition, and desire, but rubbish! How then can he repair the breach which sin hath made? But man is renewed through divine grace? yet still he feels the text applicable to himself, descriptive of sin, or why do we find such feeling confessions, such mournful complaints in

* Judges xvi. 20.

the histories of God's people in different ages of the world? Where was Abraham's strength when he went in to his maid Hagar? How great the weakness of Isaac in denying his wife; and when in his old age he would have given the blessing to Esau which God had ordained for Jacob? And what was Jacob's conduct under the loss of his son Joseph, but a weak indulgence of a wrong spirit? The commission of complicated crimes by David, and the violent strugglings of corruption in the Apostle, who declares he did that he would not, confirm the declaration, That the strength of the bearers of burdens is decreased; that there is much rubbish, so that we cannot build the wall.

I THESSALONIANS V. 15.

Follow that which is good.

NEVER may I be bringing forward the faults of which the people of God have been guilty, as they are recorded in scripture, by way of excuse for, or extenuation of my sin: God forbid I ever should be left to consider them in such a light. No; it is my sin that my strength is decayed; it is a proof of my corrupt origin that I am a child of Adam, that I am a fallen creature. Why hath the Holy Spirit recorded the failings of good men? Not that others might take encouragement thence to go and do

likewise, and as rocks to shun ; and if running against them, to seek relief where they obtained it, and not indulge a spirit of despair ; seek it in the covenant love, and mercy, and grace of an unchangeable God ; that God who is the * God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob ; that God to whom David flew for refuge, and Paul gloried in, when he cried out in triumph, I thank † God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fly then, O my soul, with the wings of faith and love, to thy Redeemer God for strength and conquest, strength to fight all thy Lord's battles, and for victory over all thy Lord's enemies. If thou wert not weak he could not be thy strength ; if thou wert not incapable of removing the burden of thy sins, that separate between thee and thy God, he could not be thine atonement. Look to, confide, and glory in Christ thy Saviour ; follow on to know the Lord ; and follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises—Then ‡ shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

* Luke xx. 37.

† Rom. vii. 25.

‡ Hosea vi. 3.

Feb 3

HOSEA XIV. 4.

I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him.

WHAT an inexhaustible treasure is the scripture ! it contains a remedy for my every spiritual disease, and this remedy all in one, and that one the Saviour God. He speaks with kindness, he acts from love, his name is Love, and his loving-kindness is like himself, the * same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This appears in the soul-reviving declaration in the text : I will heal their backslidings, even Israel's, who is described as a backsliding † heifer ; I will love them freely, even Ephraim, whose goodness ‡ is as the early dew. But lest his poor sorrowing backsliding people should conclude this was written only for Israel, only for Ephraim, observe how compassionately God changes the plural *them* into the singular *him*, " for mine anger is turned away from *him*." Words of grace ! for § grace is in the lips, and dwells upon the tongue of my Redeemer. He says, Turn || ye backsliding children, for I am married to you. How encouraging the ideas of children and the marriage relation ! what tenderness, what pity, what love ! a child to

* Heb. xiii. 8.

† Hosea iv. 16.

‡ Hosea vi. 4.

§ Psalm xlv. 2.

|| Jer. iii. 14.

whom the Saviour is married ! In this double relation stands every believer, born from above, a partaker of a spiritual nature, and united to Christ as the bride whom he loveth ; and yet backsliding ! Alas ! what is man ? what am I ? partaking the Lord's mercies, tasting his grace, experiencing his love, and yet backsliding ! How oft do various occurrences get possession of my mind ! how often am I taken by surprize ! how soon does my tinder catch fire ! My heart deceitful, my thoughts unholy and unclean, my affections halting, sin stirring within and distressing ! What must I do ? where can I betake myself ? Lord, let me hear thy voice addressing me, even me, with,—I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him.

MALACHI iii. 6.

Feb 4

I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

HOW variable the temper, changing the disposition, and fluctuating the affections of man ! Mildness and violence, sin and holiness, God and the world, alternately prevail ; but which of these predominate ? Is there any opposition made ? or is the mind calm and contented ? and am I indifferent as to what fruit I bring forth ? The Christian is an enigma, which none but a

Christian can solve. The two contraries of heat and cold are found in the same person. Sometimes the love of God so fills the heart, that he longs to be dissolved, and to be with Christ: then the spirit faints, and he hardly knows what he is, and but for former sensations and experiences would conclude his name was self-deception. He is grieved, mourns, and is filled with sorrow; but the astonishing revealed goodness of God affords encouragement to plead again the great atonement and the promise: here he sometimes finds, that he who turned and looked upon Peter turns to him and discovers a reconciled face. When he considers his ingratitude, he is terrified; when he feels the abatement of that fervor of love which he once possessed, he finds fear working within him; but when he recollects that God remembers* he is but dust, that God is the Lord that does not change, and that therefore he is not consumed, he entertains an hope that he who hath directed him to forgive his trespassing brother not † only seven times a day, but seventy times seven, will forgive him, will pardon him. Thy forbearance to cut down such a cumberer of the ground as I am, is a striking proof that thou art an unchangeable God; and though Satan whispers at this moment, Are you not spared to fill up the measure of your iniquity? I am persuaded he is a

* Psalm ciii. 14.

† Matt. xviii. 22.

liar, and that thou art the God of Truth: with thee * is no variableness or shadow of turning. Thy faints are constantly setting their seal to this truth, partaking thy mercy in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in an unchangeable God; they cry, It † is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

ISAIAH VI. 3.

Feb 5

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!

WHO then may not fear to approach the holy God! Father, Son, and Spirit. Blessed be God for the revelation of the Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead; mysterious, but encouraging! above the comprehension of man in this state, but comforting! While I read God's declaration, that the Father is holy, the Son is holy, and the Spirit is holy, and on comparing scripture with scripture, find that they are essentially and truly God, I no less find that though God is holy, and man unholy and unclean, yet God is merciful in pardoning the unholy, in cleansing the polluted sinner. The Father is holy, and yet gets glory to himself in the salvation of sinners; the Son is holy, and secures the honour and glory of the Godhead in his working out salvation for sinners;

* James i. 17.

† Lam. iii. 22.

the Spirit is holy, and discovers the holiness of the deity in the revelation of salvation to sinners. The Father ordains, the Son effects, the Spirit reveals that salvation which displays the love, grace, and power of Father, Son, and Spirit. I am a sinner; sin hath separated* between me and my God: I am a sinner, naturally lying under the curse of the law: I have been living† without God in the world, dishonouring him, and disgracing myself. God is holy; his law‡ is holy; and yet a counsel§ of peace between the eternal Trinity hath devised a plan, which being executed in the fulness of time, and revealed from heaven, discovers that holy as God is, he can, consistent with that attribute, pardon sinners; and that the way through which the pardon is granted, is a striking demonstration of his holiness, while it evinces the riches of his grace, the aboundings of his mercy, and the || height and depth of his love. The Father ordaining, the Son atoning, the Spirit applying. O the depth of the love and mercy of the Triune God! The holy law honoured, the justice of God glorified in that salvation which the Son of God wrought out, and the Spirit reveals and applies.

* Isaiah lix. 2.

† Ephes. ii. 12.

‡ Rom. vii. 12.

§ Zech. vi. 13.

|| Ephes. iii. 18, 19.

ROMANS VIII. 12.

We are debtors.

TO whom? To God; and that as our creator, our provider, and if quickened by the Spirit, as our Redeemer. In creation's work man stands foremost as an animal. The wisdom and goodness of God are conspicuous in endowing him with a rational soul, the faculty of thinking, reflecting, &c.; and yet man, in thousands of instances, lives as if the powers and endowments he possesses were considerably inferior to the brute creation. He is liberally supplied by God with the things necessary for the comfortable support of animal life; but, alas! what abuse of God's favours in the use of those providential supplies! As a creature, he does not consider the obligations he is under to his Creator; a pensioner on the liberality of his Maker, he considers not to whom he is indebted for life* and breath, and all things. Whose character am I here describing? is it that of an Hottentot, of a wild Indian, or of an inhabitant of the frozen region of Iceland? is it not the character of many who call themselves Christians? is it not mine own character? How great then must be my sin, and how inexcuseable! and when God's love, manifested unto me in tak-

* Acts xvii. 25.

ing me a wild crab by nature, and ingrafting me into Christ the fat * olive tree, is brought into the account, how magnified my crime of ingratitude ! how multiplied my sins of unmindfulness ! What my desert as a sinner but everlasting punishment ? what my wages due but eternal death ? But I am a monument of sparing mercy ; then a debtor to God for further time and opportunity to acquaint myself now with him. May I not trust that I am a partaker of saving grace ? Then am I not a debtor ? A debtor I am to him who hath not cut me off in my sins ; to him who hath not cast me off for my ingratitude. Preserved in Christ †, that mercy might abound to me a sinner ; called by sovereign grace, and brought near to God by the blood of the Lamb ‡, slain from the foundation of the world ;—am I not a debtor ?

PSALM CXXI. 2.

Feb 7

*My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven
and earth.*

WHAT am I, O Lord, that thou shouldst be my help ? while sinner is both my name and nature, that I should be regarded by thee ? that salvation should be wrought out for me, and given to me ? How § great is thy goodness, how

* Rom. xi. 17.

† Jude 1.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 19.

§ Zech. ix. 17.

great is thy beauty, O Jesus, Lord, the holy one of Israel ! Ruined by the fall, and a self-destroyer, thou art that mighty one upon whom help is laid for me a sinner ; redemption is by thee, the great sacrifice for sin ; redemption is through thee, for thou hast satisfied divine justice ; redemption is from thee, for thou art the Lord God. I feel myself described in thy word, a poor infant * lying in my blood ; yet helped of thee, the living God : I feel my weakness every day ; but I find my help cometh of the Lord, who made heaven and earth : I feel my ignorance and unmeetness for thy work ; but here again I find, to the glory of thy faithfulness, my help cometh of the Lord : I have enemies plotting my overthrow, powerful are they and politic ; I feel my weakness, that I have no might or power to resist them ; but I find also that my help cometh of the Lord. Why then should I fear, or give place to doubts in my mind ? He who is the God of my salvation possesses all power, for he made heaven and earth ; he knows all my wants ; he engages to exercise his power for my protection and preservation, and for my relief : he who made heaven and earth possesses all wisdom, and will therefore order all for my good : he hath said, I will † be with thee ; and is he not constantly fulfilling his word ? Am I a sinner, ignorant, weak, and helpless ? This

* Ezek. xvi. 1, &c.

† Isaiah xliii. 2.

Lord is Christ the Saviour, the accepted sacrifice, the * power of God, the wisdom of God.

REVELATIONS XIX. 16.

King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

Let S

SUCH is the depth of misery into which man is fallen, that no arm less than almighty can recover him : such is the evil of sin, that no mere human blood can atone for it ; nothing less than blood divine can expiate human guilt. This is the mystery the angels † of God desire to look into. Without ‡ controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. The second person in the adorable Trinity became flesh and dwelt § among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Convulsed nature testified at Christ's death, that more than mere humanity suffered. He who possessed power to lay down his life, had power to take it up again—he rose again. Astonishing mystery ! amazing grace ! Seated upon the throne of his glory, he is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Is he my king, the lord of my affections ? Important question. If I am one of his conquered ones, he is swaying

* 1 Cor. i. 24.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

§ John i. 14.

the sceptre of his love over me; subject to his power, grace, and Spirit, I am a subject of his kingdom here, and through him an heir of everlasting glory. My pride kept me a long time from coming to him; my self-importance and sufficiency eclipsed his glory; my love of the world shut out the love of him, my God; carnal self blinded my eye, that I could see no beauty or excellency in him; but he determined to conquer, and who hath resisted his power? Yet, are these his enemies slain? are they destitute of all life? or, like the benumbed viper apparently dead, do they under the sun of temptation revive again, and manifest that they still possess so much life as to be the occasion of fear? So it is; and abundant is the grace of this King of Kings, this Lord of Lords, who hath said, Sin* shall not have the dominion over you:—When† the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

EPHESIANS V. 16.

Redeeming Time.

Feb 9

MY numbered days are decreasing; my allotted time is near expiring. How much has run to waste, how much has been consumed in vanity; and,

* Rom. vi. 14.

† Isa. lix. 19.

of the little that remains, how great a portion may be the time of sickness, under the increasing infirmities of a poor sin-enervated body ! What use ought to be made of such considerations, but through the small remnant of my days to be redeeming time. Alas ! how much have the enemies of my soul had of that which is past ? When I look back, and reflect upon the imprudencies of childhood, the wickednesses of youth, and the sins of manhood ; when I consider what incumbrances I have brought upon myself by these things, and how much time is spent in thought thereupon, how many hours are passed in sleep, the amount is astonishing ; and all cry out, now, from this time, for the time to come, redeem time. There * is but a step between me and death ; and shall I live careless and unconcerned, as if this world were my home ? No ! every day, every disappointment, every pain, every trouble, every sin, join in the advice—redeem time, live for eternity, live to God. But when time given, and life spared, has been consumed in the service of God's enemies, will God look upon me if I return unto him ? if my backslidings are numerous, my wasted hours many, my prodigality of talents great, will God pardon me if I return unto him ? How encouragingly he speaks :—Let † the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let

* 1 Sam. xx. 3.

† Isaiah lv. 7.

him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon : In * returning and rest shall ye be saved.

PROVERBS XXVII. I.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

PROCRASTINATION is the thief of time.

How many, apparently in health at the time of their going to bed last night, are deprived of executing those schemes which they had planned with much fore-thought ? how many have breathed their last, who thought it might be time enough to engage heartily in the Lord's service years hence ? Alas, the folly of mankind ! What little things divert the mind from those which are of the greatest importance, and of the utmost consequence ? O my soul, to-day, while it is called to-day, lay out thyself for eternity ; ere to-morrow thou mayest have taken thy flight from the clayey tenement in which thou now dwellest ; thou mayest be in the unknown regions of the world of spirits. Let nothing divert thee from thine everlasting concerns ; be attentive to the one † thing needful. Time past is irrecoverably gone ; the

* Isaiah. xxx. 15.

† Luke x. 42.

present is all thou canst boast of: and what is this present? A moment: in time this moment, thou mayest the very next be in eternity. Oh, how short my time is! And why short? but that I may be frugal in the management of it, but that I may improve it to the noblest of purposes, the gaining that acquaintance * with God, whereby I may hope he is at peace with me, and whereby I may be stirred up to live more to his glory. Lord, quicken me in my Christian course, that I may be giving † all diligence to make my calling and election sure; to work while it is day; to labour ‡ after that meat which doth not perish, but endureth unto eternal life; to fight, to run, to endure to the end.

ROMANS VII. 20.

Sin that dwelleth within me.

THE tree grubbed up by the roots cannot sprout forth again: the tree that has been cut down, and the roots left in the ground, will send forth fresh shoots; but these in time decay at the heart and die. Circumcised with the true circumcision § of the heart, cut off from all dependance upon an arm of flesh, and delivered from the dominion of sin, I feel, by mournful experience, that the sinful

* Job xxii. 21.

† 2. Pet. i. 10.

‡ John vi. 27.

§ Rom. ii. 29.

tree of corrupt nature is not grubbed up; it is only cut down, and is continually shooting forth. Yet I feel encouragement from Paul's declaration—So * then it is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me: and were it not that scripture declareth the heart † of man answereth to the heart of man; as face to face in a glass, I must necessarily conclude, from the working of sin within me, that I was rejected of God, and left under the power of the enemies of my soul. But when I read how it has always been with the people of God, how they mourned, and for what they mourned, I entertain an hope that sin shall never flourish again, and have ‡ the dominion over me; that though it may shoot in effort, yet by-and-bye it shall wholly die, and wretched man that I am, I shall obtain deliverance finally and completely from this body of death, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who § hath delivered and will yet deliver. Have I been tempted, and enabled to resist? It was thy temptation, Satan; and it is not less thy sin since it was by the sovereign restraining grace of my Saviour I was kept from yielding. Am I not then a debtor to grace?

* Rom. vii. 20.

† Prov. xxvii. 19.

‡ Rom. vi. 14.

§ 2 Cor. i. 10.

PSALM XXII. 26.

They shall praise the Lord that seek him.

THE Lord says, I am * found of them that sought me not : and they who have found God will be seeking him ;—and why ? But that they may see more of his power † in the sanctuary, more of his ‡ glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The promise is, They shall praise the Lord. Praise is pleasant work, sweet employ. If we find a friend, when in time of need we have been seeking such an one, and find him to be true and faithful to his engagements and promises, the gratitude that arises in the heart sets the tongue a-going in speaking of him, and for him, in praising him. Christ is that friend that never fails or disappoints them that come to him and rely upon him : he § is that friend that sticketh closer than a brother : they who feel they are poor and needy, and do seek him earnestly and perseveringly, shall find him, shall praise him the Lord. What says he to the poor sensible sinner, to the poor broken-hearted contrite sinner, to the poor trembling backslider ? He || is a rewarder of them that seek him :—“ I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ¶ ye me in vain.” Christ rewards those that seek

* Isa. lxxv. 1.

† Psalm lxiii. 2.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

§ Prov. xviii. 24.

¶ Heb. xi. 6.

¶ Isa. xlv. 19.

him, by discovering to them his love and grace in a finished salvation, by giving them spiritual knowledge and wisdom, whereby they become wise unto salvation. He is the fountain from whence the blessings flow ; and to such as are seeking him, he says, Whosoever* will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely : and giving them this water, even himself, they feel their obligation, and praise him their Lord ;—they rejoice in praising him.

PSALM XXXVII. 3.

Th 13

Trust in the Lord.

WHAT a poor unbelieving creature am I ! how apt in straits and difficulties to be trusting to my own wisdom, devising ways by which I think to extricate myself, and losing sight of God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ! Is not God all-sufficient ? is he not faithful and true ? yea, is he not faithfulness and truth itself ? Who then art thou that harbourest unbelief in thy breast ? every circumstance which takes place concerning thee is either permitted or ordained ; and though the difficulties into which thou bringest thyself accuse thee of misconduct, yet thou oughtest to consider how far the hand of God is in it. The first man fell,

* Rev. xxii. 17.

though created a perfect being: God permitted him to act thus; and how is God's grace magnified in that redemption which is by the second man, Jesus Christ? Where * sin abounded grace super-abounds: and the angelic hymn at the birth of the Saviour announces to man that event, which brings the greatest glory to God:—Glory† to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards man. Let me then glorify God by putting my trust in him the Lord, for that obedience which justifies, for that sacrifice which is the only atonement. Trust then, O my soul, in the Lord, in this time of thy distress, and rely upon him for turning the hearts of the people in thy favour. Let me be always renouncing dependance upon mere human devices; and in the use of justifiable means be relying upon God. Lord ‡, unite my heart to thee.

HEBREWS I. 14.

Are they not all ministering spirits?

HOW happy a state of innocence! how miserable that of guilt! how pure the services of those beings who never fell! Alas! what am I? A poor guilty sinner. Where am I? In a world of vanity and sin, conflicting with enemies. Who

* Rom. v. 29.

† Luke ii. 14.

‡ Psalm lxxxvi. 11.

am I? Through divine grace, I trust, I am a believer in Christ; and if so, upon scripture evidences, may I not, ought I not to rely upon my reconciled God for protection, for direction, for support? Are his angels his servants that do his pleasure? are they ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation? Then I ought to rejoice in this, that the * angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. Yet how poor, how imperfect my services! how mixed with sin my very best performances! To † will is present with me; but how to perform that will I know not. How holy, how happy they, who stand always in the presence of God, adoring and serving him! Is not God always present where I am? Why is it then that I am not always happy, but because sin ‡ dwelleth in me? Am I therefore to conclude I never shall be happy? No; I shall be happy, O my Saviour God, when § I awake up after thy likeness; then, through that grace and mercy which hath been manifested unto me a sinner, I shall || be like thee, and see thee as thou art. Where ¶ I am, there shall my servant be, is thine own declaration. Save then, O Lord, thy servant, who putteth his trust in thee! Give ** thine

* Psalm xxxiv. 7.

† Rom. vii. 18.

‡ Rom. vii. 20.

§ Psalm xvii. 15.

|| 1 John iii. 2.

¶ John xii. 35.

** Psalm xci. 11, 12.

angels charge concerning me, that I may be kept in all thy ways, and may not hurt my foot against a stone.

ISAIAH VI. 4.

Red 15

Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden.

WHAT a tyrant is sin ! what a foe is Satan ! what an enemy the carnal heart of unbelief ! Under the dominion of sin, led captive by Satan, and deceived by his own heart, what an awful, what a helpless situation is man in ! drawing in the yoke of vanity, carnal, sensual, and devilish, what a burden of guilt is accumulating upon his soul ! yet great as the burden is, a slave, or rather a willing captive to the tyrant custom, he seems lost in insensibility. Where can he obtain deliverance, when made to know and feel his situation ? Christ Jesus is anointed, in the purpose of the Father, to be the deliverer of such ; and he does graciously deliver them ; he conquers for them, and he conquers them ; and in the * day of his power they are willing to submit to him ; he delivers them from the guilt of sin, from the dominion of sin, from the yoke of Satan's bondage, and from being willingly self-deceived through the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Christ engaged Satan, and conquered him :

* Psalm cxiii. 3.

Christ in human nature conquered him who had the power * of death, that is the devil : he in his grace liberates the prisoner, so that the wretched captive, being liberated, can say, Thou † hast loosed my bonds, my bonds of unbelief, pride, and prejudice ; the yoke is broken, and I am delivered from the oppressing burden thereof ; Christ my deliverer is precious to my soul.

JOSHUA IV. 10.

Jer 16

For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua ; and the people hastened and passed over.

HOW glorious is Christ, the great high-priest of his church ! what power he possesses as God ! what compassion and love for and to man ! He is the true ark ; and his presence revives the spirit of the humble and the contrite. He has promised to be with his people ; he has declared that he will ‡ never fail them nor forsake them. He is their guide and their guard through life, and over death. Is he not the mighty God, by whose power the Red-sea was divided ; by whose might the waters of Jordan stood on an heap ; and that

* Heb. ii. 19.

† Psalm cxvi. 16.

‡ Heb. xiii. 5.

too at the time of harvest, when Jordan overflowed his banks? I am a sinner; I must pass the Jordan of death. The sentence is passed:—It * is appointed unto man once to die. The voice is sounding to me, as to one of old: Abimelech †, thou shalt die! How may I obtain an hope that I shall not be overwhelmed with the waters? that I shall not perish in Jordan? Christ Jesus, who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, has passed this river for all his redeemed: he says, Look ‡ unto me, and be ye saved: When § thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: Fear not, for I am with thee.

ISAIAH LXVI. 9.

Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord.

HOW apt are sensible sinners to write bitter things against themselves; concluding from the view they have of their sins, and from their inward feelings, that the door of mercy is barred against them, and that they are excluded for ever.

* Heb. ix. 27.

† Isa. xlv. 22.

‡ Sam. xx. 16.

§ Isa. xliii. 2, 3, 5.

But do they see sin to be exceeding sinful? do they feel the misery and wretchedness of their state as sinners, lying under the sentence of the law? do they feel a desire to be delivered, and are they willing, if so be they may but be saved, that God should have all the glory of their salvation? What then shall hinder their being* the children of God by faith, which is in Christ Jesus? what shall obstruct their being brought forth into the spiritual world? They shall not be stifled in the birth, but they shall live spiritually, and yielding evangelical obedience to the will of God; they shall find to their comfort, that in Christ they live†, move, and have their being. Christ by his own voluntary engagement is bound to such: A bruised‡ reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. When he begins he will also make an end: He is Jehovah; if he brings to the birth he will cause to bring forth. Consider this, thou poor spirit-convinced, self-condemned sinner, and plead with thy God the word of his grace for the extension of his mercy to thee, through the Son of his Love, the Saviour of sinners.

* Gal. iii. 26.

† Acts xvii. 28.

‡ Isa. xlii. 3.

EZEKIEL VII. 3.

Now is the end come.

TO how many does this appropriate, who have fulfilled their numbered years, their appointed days? They have lived, they have died; and the places that once knew them now know them no more. But where are they? do they cease to be, because they exist not in this world? The* spirit returns to God who gave it: he alone determines its everlasting state. Where am I? In time; "a poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour." Where am I? In this world; entrusted with time and talents. Where shall I be soon, very soon? In the world of spirits; in the presence of him whose steward I am. What shall I stand before him for? To give an account of my stewardship. What if God should say unto me, This night, thou art not yet fifty years old, thine end of time is come; this † night thy soul shall be required of thee? Lord, I cast myself, a sinner, upon thy mercy in Christ Jesus; I see, I feel what I am in and of myself, a sinner vile and filthy, unworthy thy notice or thy favour; but thou, in infinite mercy to my soul, hast, I trust, brought me to be a daily pensioner on the bounties of thy grace in Christ Jesus. I loath ‡ it; I would

* Eccles. xii. 7.

† Luke xii. 20.

‡ Job vii. 16.

not live alway : I blefs thee for common mercies, and I praise thee for foul mercies, for spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus my Saviour—that Saviour, whom, Saul-like, I despised, I persecuted. But, Lord, thou * wilt have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy. Oh, to grace how great a debtor am I !

I CORINTHIANS XV. 10.

By the grace of God I am what I am.

AN astonishing instance of divine grace ! A brand † plucked out of the burning, a blasphemer ‡, a persecutor, and injurious, made a subject of divine grace ; yea, moreover, a steward § of the mysteries of God, a minister of Christ ! How does this thought humble me ! Less || than the least of all saints, and of sinners ¶ the chief, I magnify the grace of God ; I blefs him who hath recovered me out of the hands of the enemy, who hath quickened my soul, and visited me with his salvation. Now is the end come. This is the last day of my fiftieth year ; and it may be the last of my earthly existence. Lord, whenever death comes, do thou receive me into those mansions which Christ is gone before to prepare for all his

* Rom. ix. 15.

§ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

† Zech. iii. 2.

|| Ephes. iii. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 13.

¶ 1 Tim. i. 15.

redeemed : let me die strong in faith, giving glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, Lord, if thou shouldst see fit to continue me longer in this world, give me grace to lay out myself in thy service, that I may be a faithful steward of thy mysteries. Let me love thee more, and serve thee better, the longer I live ; and give me grace to wait all * the days of my appointed time, till my change cometh. Praise † the Lord, O my soul ! and all that is within me praise his holy name, for spiritual light, life, liberty, love, peace, and joy—all, all in Christ Jesus, my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in whom I glory, yea, and will glory, the Lord being my helper ! and when my end comes, may I be found glorying in Christ my righteousness !

I SAMUEL VII. 12.

Ebenezer.

HITHERTO hath the Lord helped me to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to my fellow sinners : hitherto hath the Lord honoured me as his instrument for good unto them. By thy grace, O my God, while life is spared, will I be laying out myself in thy service, and to thy glory ! But by thy grace it must be, so corrupt is

* Job. xiv. 14.

† Psalm ciii. 1.

my nature, so carnal my appetites—so insufficient am I, so weak, so helpless. By thy grace and strength it must be, so powerful are mine enemies, so artful my foes, so cunning my opposers. But what am I, and what my father's house, that thou shouldst thus instrumentally use me for the accomplishing thine own purpose? that thou shouldst thus honour me in the fulfilment of thine own will? We* were all but dead men before thee, walking† in a vain shadow, and disquieting ourselves in vain. Mercy, sovereign mercy, extended her arm, to pluck me, a brand, out of the burning, to make me a partaker and monument of saving grace—Glory be to my God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Why am I made to differ, but to glorify him? but that I may use what I have received from him in his service, and to his glory, even his? Let me always consider who it is hath made me to differ, and that I have nothing but what I have received, that I may be walking humbly before God, and be glorying in the Lord. Let ‡ him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.

* 2 Sam. xix. 28.

† Psalm xxxix. 6.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 31.

I SAMUEL VII. 12.

Ebenezer.

I AM this day fifty years old. How many of these years were spent in a state of wandering from God! how many of them did I walk * in darkness, not knowing whither I was going † In the year 1780 light dawned upon my soul: in the following year I was enabled to bear public testimony to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and to glory † in the cross of Christ; yea, under an experience of Christ's own declaration, "Blessed † are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake," to rejoice in suffering for Christ's sake. But, alas! since then how numberless, how peculiarly aggravating my sins of omission and of commission, of thought, word, and deed! how strong the temptations of Satan to induce me to give up preaching, endeavouring to persuade me that I was an hypocrite, a painted sepulchre, a whited wall; that it might be I was used as an instrument in building the ark, but that I should never be admitted into it! Ebenezer! hitherto the Lord hath helped me to reject Satan's suggestions; to hold on preaching Christ, and him crucified. Woe be § to me if I preach not the gospel, for ne-

* John xii. 35.

† Matt. v. 10.

† Gal. vi. 14.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 16.

cessity is laid upon me. Lord, help me ! for in thee do I put my trust ; to thee do I look for grace ; and on thee do I rely for strength. Grant that whatever I receive from thee may be laid out in thy service ; that I may always consider, that neither soul, body, or temporal things are mine, but thine, lent me in mercy and covenant love, that I may glorify thee with my soul, my body, my all.

ISAIAH XLVII. 4.

Feb 22

The Lord of Hosts is his name.

WHOSE name is this ? It is Christ's, who is the friend, the Saviour of sinners. He * is God over all, blessed for evermore. All the armies of heaven are under his command ; they all worship him. He died in human nature to save sinners : he † rose again for their justification : he ‡ ever liveth to make intercession for them. He is the Lord of Hosts :—Lift § up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in ! Who is the King of Glory ? The Lord of Hosts ; he is the King of Glory.—Risen Jesus demands entrance of right. The prophets believed in him, truly

* Rom. ix. 5.

† Rom. iv. 25.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

§ Psalm xxiv. 9, 10.

God; they rested their expectation of eternal happiness by a resurrection from the dead on his resurrection; and could have joined in that ascription of praise to God, with the apostles who received the promise.—Blessed* be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord of Hosts is his name. Let† all the angels of God worship him, who is‡ the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Does Jesus possess all power in heaven and earth? then he § is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Here, sinful man as I am, I find encouragement to come to God for pardon, acceptance, peace, and an hope full of immortality.

PROVERBS xxx. 28.

The spider layeth hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.

AM I less wise than the spider? so ignorant that I may come to learn wisdom? Yes; all creation holds out instruction to me, if I am but able to take hold of it. He who sends me to

* 1 Pet. i. 3.

† Heb. i. 6.

‡ John i. 14.

§ Heb. vii. 25.

the ox and to the ass to learn gratitude, sends me to the spider to learn industry and watchfulness. With what pains does she weave her web? with what industry does she persevere in repairing every the least breach? and how continually is she watching for her food? What breaches has sin made in my peace! how needful for me to apply to him who is the * repairer of the breach; to lay hold on the strength of the Lord, that my peace may be renewed; to be putting on, by faith, the righteousness of the Redeemer, which is the alone garment of salvation! yea, to be continually watching for that spiritual food, which God brings me in his word from day to day, that my immortal part may live! What says my Saviour? Incline † your ear, and hear, and your soul shall live; eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. What a divine warrant is here for appropriating Christ Jesus in all his fullness to the soul! what rich and precious food is this Jesus, whose flesh ‡ is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed! Let me be always watching for the crumbs which fall from my master's table; always abiding in the king's palace.

* Isa. lviii. 12.

† Isa. lv. 2, 3.

‡ John vi. 55.

ZEPHANIAH III. 15.

The Lord hath taken away thy judgments; he hath cast out thine enemy.

WHO is the person that is thus blessed of the Lord? Is it the man of science that devotes his time to study, or the man of self-importance, who idolizes himself? Is it not rather the person who feels his state as a sinner, laments his ignorance, renounces all confidence in the flesh, and who is approaching God with humility, self-abasement, and faith? expressing his feelings and his hope, that through Christ, the great atonement for sin, he shall be forgiven his iniquities, he is crying, God * be merciful to me a sinner! But by what warrant can he come and plead thus at a throne of grace for mercy? First, he would not come if his natural enmity was not overcome: secondly, his natural enmity being overcome, he finds his warrant in the word of God. He feels he is a sinner—that humbles him; he feels he is helpless—that stirs him up to seek; and seeking in the word of God, he finds there is help † laid upon one that is mighty, he feels a desire to know he is interested in this mighty one; and searching the scriptures, he finds his warrant to come to him, and lay hold on him for salvation; he sees

* Luke xviii. 13.

† Psalm lxxxix. 19.

that the judgment due to sinners is taken away by Christ, their surety, fulfilling all righteousness, living for them, and dying a sacrifice for their sins; and blessed of God with the true circumcision* of the heart, he worships God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.

PSALM XXXIV. 18.

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

SO nigh as to dwell in them; and such a Saviour, as to be always present with them, preserving them by his power: he dwells with the humble and contrite, to revive † them, to comfort them. Happy people! highly favoured! greatly privileged! Sinners brought nigh unto God by his Son, Jesus Christ, their Saviour:—the Lord nigh unto them when their hearts are broken down under an agonizing sense of their sins; nigh unto them by the Holy Spirit revealing Christ unto them, that they may fly unto him as their refuge; nigh unto them to work faith in them, to lay hold on Christ as their righteousness and strength; and nigh unto them, to comfort them with abounding consolations, to give ‡ them the

* Phil. iii. 3.

† Isa. lvii. 15.

‡ Isa. lxi. 3.

garment of joy for the spirit of heaviness; nigh unto them, to encourage them to fight the good fight of faith. Let me enquire what view I have of myself. Do I see my sins to be more in number than the hairs of my head? that I am black because of pollution, odious because of deformity? How do I feel? contented and easy, or pained and grieved? broken-hearted, and of a contrite spirit? Then bless the Lord, O my soul, for being nigh unto thee, to begin his work in thee! Am I clear in my judgment as to the appointed way of a sinner's justification with God? and am I looking to Christ for justification from all law charges, conscience accusations, and the sentence of condemnation? Then God is nigh unto me, manifesting his grace and love.

MICAH VII. 19.

He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities.

METHINKS I hear the renewed sinner, under the hidings of God's face, thus reasoning with himself on the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. He had enjoyed the bright shining of the sun of righteousness into his soul; God had lifted up the light of his countenance upon him; standing on the mount of spiritual consolation, he was drinking deep of the river that flows from

God's right hand : but now clouds intervene, comfort fails, and all is dark ; yet he ponders the loving-kindness and faithfulness of the Lord, he reasons thus with himself :—Is not God faithful ? is not the Lord unchangeable ? can his compassions fail ? or is there an end to his tender mercies ? No ; he will turn again, he will have compassion upon us ; and it will appear in his subduing our iniquities, in his conquering our perverse disputings, sinful inclinations, and worldly sensual desires ; so that I shall again rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation. Glorious Jesus, shine into my soul ; restore comfort to thy mourner ; visit * me with thy salvation ; lift † up the light of thy countenance upon me, and I shall be whole ; suffer not mine enemy to rejoice over me ; comfort the soul of thy servant, that I may rejoice in thee.

MATTHEW XX. 32.

What will ye that I shall do unto you ?

DOES the sight of sin terrify me ? the strictness of God's law make me cry out, Who † can be saved ? and the severity of divine justice seem to cut off all hope of forgiveness ? Let me hear the Saviour's small still voice of compassion and

* Psalm cvi. 4.

† Psalm iv. 6.

‡ Matt. xix. 25.

love addressing me, What wilt thou that I should do unto you? Encouraged, I reply, Lord, grant me thy salvation. How gracious is the Redeemer! how kindly he compassionates! how lovingly he invites! how sweetly he draws! The blind men pray—he hears; they mention their wants—he relieves them. What grace is displayed herein for my encouragement! what pity and compassion do here meet for my comfort! Open, Lord, mine eyes, that I may at all times see such fullness in thee, as that, under all my discouragements from sin within, and from temptation without, I may still be enabled to rely upon thee for my salvation. Clear away the remaining film from mine eyes, remove unbelief from my heart, and establish me upon thyself, O blessed Jesus, the everlasting rock of ages! and uphold me, that I slip not. I come as a beggar, to receive the riches of thy grace; as a sinner, to receive mercy in the pardon of my sins; as helpless, to receive strength to withstand mine enemies; as exercised with doubts and fears, to receive the fulfilment of thy promises; as undeserving thy notice, to receive sensible manifestations of thy favour; as a backslider, for healing; as a mourning sinner, for comfort; as poor, naked, and wretched, for all in thee and from thee.

PSALM CXVIII. 13.

*Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall ; but
the Lord helped me.*

HOW many are the enemies of a real Christian ! Satan suggesting, the world tempting, a carnal heart unbelieving : these are the three chiefs under which numerous hosts are acting. And why so acting ? To distress the believer, to bring contempt upon the word of God and the ordinances of religion, that thereby Satan's kingdom may be enlarged, the world countenanced in its sinful pleasures and vanities, and the carnal heart kept from looking to Christ, and from trusting in him. Such are the Christian's enemies, and such the ends they have in view ; and shall I give way before them, and let them have the honour of a triumph over me, through my cowardice, my want of watchfulness, and through my restraining prayer, so that I shall be exposed to their upbraidings, their insults ? What shall I do ? and on whom shall I rely ? I must watch * and pray, that I enter not into temptation ; for however willing the spirit, the flesh is weak : I must be constantly coming to Christ, spreading my case, Hezekiah like, before the Lord, and be putting my trust in him—in him who hath promised that

* Matt. xxvi. 41.

he will * uphold me, that he will keep me : I must beware of confiding in Saul's armour, mine own strength—It is not thy bow that shall deliver thee : I must put † on the Lord Jesus Christ, and go forth in his strength, and he will enable me, as he oft hath done, to triumph over mine enemy. Thou hast thrust fore at me, that I might fall, but the Lord helped me.

PSALM LXXXVIII. 1.

O Lord God of my salvation !

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HOW glorious the titles of God ! how abounding in consolation to the humble and contrite spirit ! Salvation is of the Lord ; free as the Lord can bestow it :—By ‡ grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. It is full as the Lord can make it : Your § sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. Am I oppressed with the burden of my sin and of my guilt ? Then I am encouraged to go to him who hath the words of eternal life ; there I am sure to find a refuge from the storm, because mercy flows through that Redeemer who is Christ the Lord ; and all who fly to him, the refuge set before them in the gospel, find strong

* Isa. xli. 10.

‡ Ephes. ii. 8.

† Rom. xiii. 14.

§ Heb. viii. 12.

consolation. Have I been for many years murdering my soul by dishonouring my God? I may come, and take hold on the horns of this altar; there I shall find a sure refuge, no power can drag me thence to execution, because God my Saviour embraces me in the arms of his everlasting mercy: here I shall find that the Lord God is my salvation; here I shall see something of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; here I shall find the waters of consolation flowing into my soul from Christ the living rock; here I shall eat and be satisfied; here I shall rejoice and sing:—O Lord †, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

PSALM XXXIII. 6. *March*

The word of the Lord. *2*

A TREASURE invaluable! a storehouse inexhaustible! a magazine completely filled! Here are riches for the poor, food for the hungry, armour for the warrior, medicine for the sick, clothing for the naked, water for the thirsty, cordials for the faint. It abounds with all things necessary for man's support through life, and his comfort in death: the riches of divine grace are

* 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

† Isa. xii. 1.

laid up in Christ ; the bread of life is Christ ; the warrior's armour is provided and put on by Christ ; the medicine is Christ ; the garment is the righteousness of Christ ; the water flows from the living rock, which is Christ ; the promises are cordials given from God in Christ ; the word of the Lord reveals Christ, the all in all ; yea, Christ is the word of the Lord :—In * the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Christ is the fountain of all existence ; he is † the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ; by him all things subsist, as they all receive their existence from him. But am I concerned in all this ? am I a poor sinner, looking to Christ for the riches of his grace ? am I a sensible sinner, hungering after the kingdom of God and his righteousness ? am I spiritually feeding on Christ, the bread of life, putting him on as my armour of righteousness, applying to his blood for cleansing, trusting to his righteousness for justification, and drinking of that water which flows from him ? Then the word of the Lord is precious unto me, and Christ my glory.

* John i. 5.

† Rev. xxii. 13.

MATTHEW IV. 4.

*March 13**It is written.*

JESUS, my Saviour, how powerful was this word in thy mouth, when assaulted by Satan, he was bruising thy heel ! How didst thou confound and vanquish that foe ! Let me see thee with the eye of faith engaging and conquering for me ; and give me the sword* of the spirit, the word of my God, to encounter all mine enemies with. It is written, Thou art † the God of salvation, the Saviour of all that come unto thee. I feel, O thou gracious Lord, my need of thee daily, yea hourly, when I look into myself, and see how weak, how vile, how polluted I am. I look to thee for cleansing, for it is written, The ‡ blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. When I am made sensible, under the teaching of the spirit, how I am fallen from thine image, in which man was originally formed, I look to thee for the renewing power of thy Spirit to be put forth in me ; since it is written, Where § the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty ; and that they, in whom the Lord the Spirit works faith, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to

* Ephes. vi. 17.

† Jonah ii. 6.

‡ 1 John i. 7.

§ 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ; or rather, from the Lord the Spirit. All that is written in the scriptures is written for my benefit, if I believe in Christ the great subject of divine revelation :—All * scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable.

ZECHARIAH IX. 17.

How great is his goodness !

WHO among the sons of men, or of the holy angels, is there, that can tell how great the goodness of the Lord is? Angels preserved in their first estate must acknowledge his goodness to them exceeds their full comprehension. Man, redeemed through Christ Jesus the atonement, must acknowledge God's goodness to him exceeds that he hath shewn to unfinning angels. Man, a rebel, pardoned freely, and pardoned fully : man, a sinner, filthy and polluted, washed in blood of divine efficacy, and made purer and whiter than the drifted snow : Christ, the eternal Son of God, covenanting with his Father for sinners, that he fulfilling his engagements for them, they might be restored to the divine favour, and be honoured with the names and privileges of the sons and daughters of God : the Father, in the fulfilment

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

of the counsel* of peace that was between him and his Son, conferring these titles and privileges upon them: and the Holy Spirit, revealing Christ in them, as their covenant head and gracious Redeemer, and as the way by which they have access unto God. How great then is his goodness! Am I a partaker of it? am I interested in it? has this goodness been manifested unto me? can I recline upon Christ for everlasting glory, as well as rest upon him for present happiness? Then, blessed of the Lord, I shall be coming† up out of this wilderness, leaning upon Christ my beloved.

NEHEMIAH VI. 7.

Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

THUS, O my soul, I call upon thee. Counsel is needful and salutary, when complied with as given of the Lord. Is there not a cause to take counsel? are not the days evil? are not enemies surrounding, attacking, overcoming? Does not pride work by thy humility? and presumption gain the ascendancy by self-confidence? How often does the idol self get the applause of the heart? how frequently, and at a throne of grace, and in reading the scripture, yea, in the service of the sanctuary, dost thou hear, as it were, the

* Zech. vi. 13.

† Sol. Song viii. 5.

whisper of an enemy, applauding thee, and robbing Christ of his glory? Come now, therefore, and let us take counsel together. The word of the living God says, He* that trusteth his own heart is a fool. How often have I been, yea, how often am I this fool! A deceived heart turneth me aside, so that though God hath said, He will not give his glory to another, yet I am ascribing glory to myself instead of shame. What a subtle foe is Satan! what a deceitful enemy is my own heart! What shall I do? Hear what the wonderful counsellor saith, and comply:—My† son, give me thy heart. Here, O Lord Jesus, I bring it unto thee; do thou take it, and turn it, and fashion it, and mould it in the gospel; spiritualize it, that I may find it to be spiritual minded, and, under thy government, yielding obedience unto thee as my sovereign, and glorifying thee as my God.

ISAIAH XXXVII. 14.

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

O MY soul, thou art no stranger to the arts and devices of thine enemy. How often hast thou heard Satan boasting his success against

* Prov. xxviii. 26.

† Prov. xxiii. 26.

those who were stronger in the faith : “ They were not able to stand before me ; where is that God who hath delivered his people out of my hand ? where is the God of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob ? where is the God of David, Jeremiah, Solomon, Peter ? were they delivered ? did not they yield to my counsel, my strength ? and thinkest thou that thou shalt escape ? that thou canst stand against me ? what now is thy nature but corrupt ? what thy passions but violent ? thine appetites but vitiated ? thine inclinations but sensual ? thy resolutions but frail ? thine affections but carnal ? thy service but formal ? how often have I taken thee captive ? and thinkest thou now to find deliverance ? ” Thus I read Satan’s letters to me ; and while I acknowledge the charges to be just, I spread my case before the Lord ; and pleading guilty to the indictment of mine enemy, I present my supplication to my judge, to direct me, to deliver me. And, O the grace of God, in revealing Christ the only deliverer to me—that Saviour, that Redeemer of sinners ! Lord, keep me thus at all times coming to thee, and be my counsellor and helper in every time of need.

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SOLOMON'S SONG VII. 10.

I am my Beloved's ; and his desire is towards me.

HOW powerful the believer's motives to love Christ ! Christ loves him, and has a strong desire towards him. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the disciple feels Christ to be the beloved of the soul ; he knows that Christ's desire is towards him : yet there are seasons when the workings of unbelief prevail, when former evidences are obscured by intervening clouds ; still, however, Christ rests * in his love, for he is God unchangeable, and still the poor distressed disciple is leaning upon his master's bosom : Christ is his beloved ; and like Mary he is seeking him, and enquiring after him whom his soul loveth. No other love can satisfy the now inflamed desires of his soul. While this holy ardent longing continues, Christ, who has thus stirred up the soul, manifests his desire was towards it : He † stands behind the wall ; he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice ; he speaks, he says, Rise up my fair one, and come away. How lovely in Christ's eyes is this mourning bride ! how gracious is he to her whose love is so strong towards him ! How is this exemplified in Christ's appeal to Peter ;

* Zeph. iii. 17.

† Song ii. 9, 10.

in Christ's message and declaration to sorrowing, weeping Peter. Lord *, thou knowest that I love thee, was Peter's answer. Christ spake words of peace to Peter, a proof of his love to Peter, assuring him, that though he had denied him, yet his love should be so strong, as that he should lay down his life for him, he should hold out to the end, for that he would be his support and strength. Soul, is Christ thy beloved? and what reason hast thou to think his desire is towards thee? is Christ precious in thy sight, and lovely in thy estimation? Perhaps thou art crying, O that I could use the language of his church as to my feelings and convictions! O that I knew Christ was mine, and I was his! O that he was my beloved, and that I was persuaded his love was towards me! Whence do these desires arise within thee, but from him whose desire is towards thee? Art thou hungering † and thirsting after the kingdom of God, and his righteousness? is Christ the one desire of thy soul? and art thou giving ‡ up every thing for the excellency of the knowledge of him? Surely thou art doing this, because thou seest Christ is lovely; because thou art convinced, that the knowledge of him is more § to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Whence arises all this in thy mind, but from him

* John xxi. 17, 18.

† Phil. iii. 8.

‡ Matt. v. 6.

§ Psalm xix. 10.

who desires thine eternal happiness, and who hath manifested this, by making thee willing in the day of his power, by giving thee eyes to see, and an heart of flesh to feel? Take encouragement then, O soul; and while thou art thus desiring Christ, believe his desire is towards thee. Look unto him: let thy love be chaste to him, and strong to him, as his desire towards thee.

PSALM CXVIII. 27.

Bind the sacrifices with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the altar.

WHAT an honour conferred on sinful mortals, that God, in pity toward them, and compassion for them, should ordain a mean of reconciliation, should provide an altar, to which they are invited to fly for security from divine wrath! and upon which every returning prodigal is directed to offer up his sacrifice of prayer and praise! How precious must Christ be to the broken and contrite spirit! how full of grace in standing forth to make peace by his blood! how abundant in mercy, in becoming a mediator, and offering up the services of his people, with an almighty intercession for them! and thereby the incense ascends to, and is accepted by God! Through Christ, what kind answers to prayer!

what fresh pouring out of the Spirit into the soul !
 what subsequent rejoicing in the heart ! what true
 peace in the conscience ! Jesus Lord, to thee
 I bring my poor sacrifices of praise and prayer.
 Praise, for what my God hath done for me ; for
 what thou art unto me, my Saviour, my Lord,
 and my God ; and I would, with the cords of love
 and faith, bind these sacrifices unto the horns of
 the altar : there I stand confessing and praying,
 and relying upon thee for protection, pardon, and
 comfort ; without thee I can have no access unto
 the Father, nor do any thing acceptable in his
 sight : Thou art the way ; on thee, therefore,
 would I offer up the sacrifices of prayer and praise
 continually.

Much

ROMANS VII. 24.

*O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me
 from the body of this death ?*

HOW has the apostle herein described my
 feelings ! I am wretched, because I feel
 this body of death has an existence within me.
 I feel its operation, its enmity, its power, its op-
 position : how it strives for the ascendancy ! yea,
 how it conquers, and triumphs over me ! But,
 woe is me ! I am weak, I am foiled ; I renew
 my resolutions ; I am again attacked, and again
 overcome. This is the consequence of losing

fight of Christ, and trusting to myself; and now the adversary of my soul gains an advantage over me through the perfidy and treachery of my own deceitful heart. O that I could rejoice in faith in Christ my strength, that I might be constantly maintaining war against my inward foe. What an enemy is my nature to me! corrupt and struggling within me, or lulling me asleep in the arms of carelessness and security! Glory to thee, O my God, that thou hast in mercy to my soul opened mine eyes to see what I am, and brought me to look to and seek to Jesus for salvation. Paul looking from himself to Christ, the friend of sinners, cries out: I thank * God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! *Our Lord!* The same Lord is the helper of every believer. The same Jesus Christ is the strength and support of all that put their trust in him. O my soul! look to and put thy trust in this Lord; and in the mercy of the Highest thou shalt not miscarry.

2 TIMOTHY IV. 5.

Endure afflictions.

I OUGHT then patiently to submit to the will of the Lord, in compliance with his command. But what are the motives for submission? am I submissive only because I cannot help myself? This is

* Rom. vii. 25.

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the submission of a slave, not of a servant; much less of a son. Am I submissive from a conviction of my desert as a sinner, and of God's love as a Father to me, in his Son Jesus Christ? Why * should a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins. It † is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed, because his tender compassions fail not. I desire to submit, because my sufferings are less than mine iniquities deserve. I desire to acquiesce in God's will with full resignation, because I see goodness, mercy, and love in the dispensation. What a mercy that I have not been cut off in the midst of my sins! How perverse my disposition! how rebellious my will! how carnal, sensual, and unclean my heart! how filthy imaginations pester me! Satan, how art thou the enemy of my peace, working on me by suiting thy temptations to my wicked corrupt heart! But how oft have I seen the Lord's goodness to me, in this land of the living, in restraining grace, in persevering grace! how oft has the Lord hedged up my way; and with the thorns and briars of affliction made me sensible of my base conduct towards him! Ought not I then patiently to submit, and to endure afflictions? Lord, sanctify them unto me, and me unto thyself.

* Lam. iii. 39.

† Lam. iii. 22.

March 11

PSALM CXIX. 73.

*Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me.
O give me understanding, that I may learn thy
commandments !*

LORD, hast thou made me? Then it is my duty to serve thee, and to live to thy glory. I feel through thy mercy my situation as by nature, a child of wrath, lying and walking in darkness, not knowing whither I was going. Through thy grace, in astonishing mercy, thou hast brought me out of darkness into thy marvellous light; yet I see but through a glass darkly; I feel my ignorance; I am sensible I know but little; I know nothing yet as I ought to know. Glorious Jesus, arise thou sun of righteousness, and shine more and more into my soul, that I may, through fresh discoveries of thy love, feel more sensibly the obligations I am under unto thee, who hast not only made me and fashioned me with thy hands a rational creature, but who, by thy sovereign almighty power, hath, I trust, both made and fashioned me a vessel of mercy in thy grace, for the master's service in everlasting glory; and though I dwell among scorpions, the sinful thoughts of a deceitful heart, yet in thee am I brought to put my trust for the salvation of soul and body. Put thy Spirit within me, that, being taught of thee, I may understand thy command-

ments. Do thou be my wisdom, that I may find I am increasing in spiritual understanding. I know so much of thee, as to abhor myself: let me under thy teaching be growing downward in humility, and upward in faith. Influence me, Holy Spirit, to practical godliness, that I may be walking in God's commandments.

PSALM XVI. 1.

March
12

Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.

UNLESS thou, O God, art my preserver, I must fall—fall into the snares of the fowler, which he is continually spreading for me, that being entangled therein, I may be distressed in my soul, I may be plunged into misery. Preserve me, O Lord, I beseech thee, from this enemy; enable me to see through all his artifices, that I may not be taken by surprize, that I may not fall among them that are slain by him. I dwell in an enemy's country, and the world is holding out its allurements. I feel my weakness, and I look up to thee for help. Preserve me from seduction; from being entangled by the pleasures, the vanities of the world; and strengthen me against its smiles; for in thee do I trust! And, Oh my deceitful heart! how can I resist and stand out against thee, but in the strength of Jesus, the captain of

my salvation ! How often do I find this mine enemy whispering traitorous counsel ! how often struggling with might for gaining his unfriendly purpose ! This is the foe of mine own house. O Lord, do thou give me a discerning eye, and a sound judgment ; give me grace and strength, that thou being my preserver, I may find myself strong in the Lord, and safe in thy keeping. I trust to thee for protection on my journey to London this day. Life is a journey ; the way is full of danger :—what but an almighty arm can preserve ! Keep me in the strait road that leadeth to glory ; quicken my speed ; give me grace, to give * all diligence to make my calling and election sure.

PSALM XCI. 13.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder ; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.

GRACIOUS words to a poor weak assaulted believer ;—full of comfort, as proceeding from the everlasting love of God. How often, in the midst of solemn duties, do I find the lion and the adder, the lust of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, assaulting me, perplexing me, terrifying me, robbing me of my

* 2 Pet. i. 10.

peace, by interrupting my communion with God ! Yet, through grace, these attacks and assaults are made beneficial to me, as they drive me more to Christ, convince me more, that unless he upholds me I shall fall, make me think more meanly and lowly of myself, and compel me to fly with all speed to that refuge which is set before me in the gospel : they stir me up to read and meditate upon the word and promises ; and here I find relief, when I see that the greatest scripture saints found the same evils stirring within them, and the same outward enemies besetting them, and that God's faithfulness was their support ; that soon they should tread upon the necks of these kings ; should soon trample them under feet. O happy time, when my deliverance shall be complete ! when, through Christ, I shall triumph over all mine enemies. Here I must dispute every inch of ground ; but it must be in the strength of my Lord. The lion may roar, but shall not devour ; the adder may sting, but shall not kill ; the dragon may bite, but shall not destroy : for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have said, I will * never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

* Heb. xiii. 5.

I PETER II. 17.

Honour the King.

LET me rejoice in thee, O Jesus, thou King of Kings, thou Lord of Lords, for thy mercies to this land, in sparing the life of the King upon the throne so long. Preserve him, in thy further mercy, from the machinations of his enemies; guide him with thy counsel through time; and finally crown him with everlasting glory. How can a person, who professes to believe the scripture to be a divine revelation, meddle with those who are given to change; since it is written, The * powers that be are ordained of God; and again it is enjoined, Fear † God and the King, and meddle not with them who are given to change. I might surely, with equal consistency, with equal faithfulness to God, side with the Arian and Socinian, who profess to read and understand the scriptures, and be guided by them, and yet renounce Christ, the appointed ‡ heir of all things, the § mighty God, the everlasting Father. But, glory be to God, here I see the power that is, is ordained of God; that there is none other God that can save after this sort, for there || is none other name under heaven given to man,

* Rom. xiii. 1.

§ Isa. ix. 6.

† Prov. xxiv. 21.

|| Acts iv. 12.

‡ Heb. i. 2.

whereby we may be saved, but the alone name, Christ Jesus. He is the great head of the church, for the government is upon his shoulders: he is the King that reigneth in Zion. The true believer acknowledges no other Lord: he says, It is true, indeed, that other * Lords have had the dominion over me, but by thee only will I now make mention of thy name.

PROVERBS I. 23.

Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.

WISDOM crieth; let me hear her voice, and attend unto her counsel. How often am I reproofed; and what fresh occasion am I giving for reproof. God, blessed be his name, and exalted be his grace in Christ Jesus, both reproves and turns. Have I not been, from time to time, yea, am I not now daily going astray, like a sheep that is lost, following mine own ways? yet the Lord hath called, and hath not given me over as a prey unto mine enemy. Do I see my sin? the horrid evil of it, the aggravating circumstances attending the commission of it, against light, reason, and renewed resolutions? An enemy whispers, "You must now take up again; break

* Isa. xxvi. 13.

through those barriers which you have raised against yourself by accumulated guilt; you must live better; read, meditate, and pray more; and then you will, for these practices, find a door of consolation open." Hold proud heart; hold cunning lying Satan; if I stop here I shall stick in a quagmire, I shall find myself in an horrible pit indeed—in a pit wherein there is no water. Is it not Christ to whom I am to look for succour? to whom I am to fly for refuge and relief? Does not he say, Look * unto me, and be ye saved;—and, Turn you at my reproof:—but how shall I turn, Lord? Behold my gracious promise to effect that for you, by my Spirit, which you cannot do for yourself; I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you. I reply: Turn † thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned!

PSALM CXXXVIII. 7.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.

HOW good is the Lord! how full of grace is my God! how oft in trouble hath he visited me, hath he revived me! yea, when I have been ready to faint, how oft hath he succoured me! Man ‡ is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

* Isa. xlv. 22.

† Jer. xxxi. 18.

‡ Joh v. 7.

Can I expect to be exempt from that which is entailed upon mankind as transgressors? The world is a scene of trouble, arising from men's sinful practices. What pain, sorrow, affliction, and trouble, arise from sin? How many, alas, in their troubles, have fled to self-murder, to get rid of their wretchedness! How many, seeing no relief at hand, gnashing their teeth with indignation against their Maker, have, under disappointment, wished themselves dead, from a delusive idea, that by death they should be relieved from all their troubles! How is it that I have not been left to act as they have done, when Satan forced into my mind the same cruel suggestions? Through the tender mercies of my God, who, by his restraining grace, hath preserved me, and who, by his saving grace, brought me to look to Christ for the salvation of my soul, and, by his own everlasting Spirit, is working resignation within me to my heavenly Father's will, whereby I am made willing to wait * all the days of my appointed time. God knows my troubles, and will revive me under them: he hath promised, he will fulfil:—Call † upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

* Job. xiv. 14.

† Psalm l. 15.

I TIMOTHY IV. 15.

*March 17**Meditate upon these things.*

A Golden sentence ! A prescription followed, affording the most salutary effects ; a cordial for the soul, yielding true relief and satisfaction. The soul, like the bird upon the wing, is buoyed up above the world, kept soaring aloft, draws nearer the sun, breathes a purer air, and solaces itself in refined enjoyments : it looks down on the world with wonder, pity, and compassion ; with wonder, that itself should ever have been so taken up with its trifles, so engrossed with its allurements ; with pity for those who are still bound and fettered by it ; with compassion for those who are immersed in it. The more this direction is followed, the more will the affections be drawn from earth to heaven. The glories of Jesus, seen with the eye of faith, will operate like the loadstone, and attract—will bring the soul to cry out, Whom * have I in heaven but thee ; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee : Thou † art fairer than the children of men ; full of grace are thy lips ; yea, thou art altogether lovely. The man of faith hath an eagle's eye : he can look at the glorious Sun of Righteousness ; and the nearer he looks, the greater beauties he

* Psalm lxxiii. 25.

† Psalm xlv. 2.

can discover. There are no spots upon that sun. He * sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus ; he sees Jesus to be glorious, because he is struck with the peculiar essentials of the Deity, continually discoverable in him ; he sees, he feels Christ to be very and truly God. While he is thus soaring aloft in the regions of meditation and contemplation, he finds himself instructed in the secret of the Lord ; for the secret † of the Lord is with them that fear him. But, alas ! on a sudden, his wings are clipped, and he finds himself entangled with the cares and concerns of this life ; he feels he is not freed from that which causes pain and uneasiness. In this situation, considering what is his duty, and earnest in fulfilling it, he so struggles with every opposition to the spiritual work in which he is engaged, that he feels he is under the influence of divine grace, and blesses his Redeemer for spiritualizing his affections ; even his worldly concerns, and the corrupt workings of his nature are improved to the spiritual prosperity of his soul ; he sees the wisdom of Providence in placing him in an active state of life ; he sees the goodness of God in suffering the Canaanite to dwell in the land ; and hence he finds the necessity of keeping his eye fixed upon Christ, and of exercising faith on Christ, the Lord his righteousness. O my soul, meditate on this glo-

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Psalm xxv. 14.

fious God, Father, Son, and Spirit ; on the covenant engagements of the Father and the Son in the counsel of peace ; on the Spirit's operation ; on the privileges of the redeemed ; on the employment of the spirits of just men made perfect. Learn to extract some sweet from every bitter in life ; and consider eternity ; prepare for it, live to it—and all in Christ.

PSALM LIX. 10.

The God of my mercy shall prevent me.

HAPPY faint, who could thus glory in God, thus exercise faith upon him in the time of trial, as thine unchangeable God ! How is it I feel, from time to time, such variations within me, but because I do not exercise faith on God, as that Almighty Being who changeth not ? Is he not fixed in his purpose, immutable in his will, and faithful in the execution thereof ? How often, when Satan tempts and accuses, am I inclined to yield ? and yet how good is the mercy of God, in hedging up my way, and in influencing me to fly to Christ, my sure refuge. Has not God given me abundant proof that he is the God of my mercy ? has he not frequently, when * the enemy came in like a flood, lifted up a standard against

* Isa. lix. 19.

him, and given me comfortable deliverance? Ought I not then to rely upon this God for preventing grace, since his grace has so abounded to me a sinner? O thou God of my mercy, let me continually find thou art preventing me, by supplying me, out of my Redeemer's fullness, against the hour of mine enemies' attack. I am weak, irresolute, frail—thou knowest that I am but dust; hide * me under the shadow of thy wings, that, in every stormy tempest, I may find I am safe under thy protection and preservation, I am looking unto thee for preventing mercy, that, under thy instructions and influence, I may be kept from running into the snares of mine enemies, that I may not be entangled in the nets they are spreading for me.

LAMENTATIONS III. 22.

It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed.

THE desert of sin is death. God hath said, The † soul that sinneth, it shall die. All † have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. All then are guilty in the sight of God. God's word is truth; it will stand the trial. Infidels may scoff and throw contempt upon revelation; it is no wonder—they do not understand it—the §

* Psalm xvii. 8.

† Rom. iii. 33.

† Ezek. xviii. 4.

§ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

God of this world hath so blinded their eyes, that they cannot see. I must, and I will say, and glory be to God that I can say it, it is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed. I am a sinner, my desert is death; but the execution of the sentence is suspended—it is more than suspended, through him who hath loved me, and given himself for me, even Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant: he undertook, he fulfilled; he lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, for sinners; and he ever liveth to make intercession with God for his redeemed. Glorious truth! Well might the Psalmist say, Glorious* things are spoken of thee, thou city of God; for the church of God, that city, is interested in this scripture truth:—I lay † down my life for my sheep;—because ‡ I live, ye shall live also. Every citizen of Zion must then be secure:—Thine § they were, and thou gavest them me: They || are preserved in Christ; they are the called in God's time; and they are brought to glory in Christ, their Saviour, their Redeemer.

* Psalm lxxxvii. 3.

† John x. 15.

‡ John xiv. 19.

§ John xvii. 6.

|| Jude 1.

PROVERBS XXI. 14.

A gift in secret pacifieth anger.

O LORD, how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out ! Tune my heart, like thy servant's of old, to sing of * mercy and judgment. No unclean thing can dwell in thy presence ; and sin is that abominable thing which thou hatest, which drew down thy judgments on the old world, that for which thou art now contending with the nations of Europe. Yet there is, blessed be thy name, a remnant † according to the election of grace ; and that, because thine anger towards them is pacified by that gift which thou hast accepted. The delights of Christ Jesus were with the sons of men before ever the worlds were made : he graciously entered into a voluntary engagement with thee for them ; and, satisfying thy justice, made a way for thy mercy to flow to the rebellious race of men :—Before ‡ the mountains were settled he was with thee, as one daily thy delight, rejoicing always before thee—rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. He is the true paschal lamb ; that lamb § slain, by divine appointment, from the foundation of the

* Psalm ci. 1.

† Rom. ii. 5.

‡ Prov. viii. 25, 34, 31.

§ Rev. xiii. 8.

world: through his voluntary engagement, and thy voluntary acceptance of him, a sacrifice for sin, thine anger towards those whom thou hast given him is pacified—thine anger is not only restrained, but pacified—and all thy dispensations towards them are dispensations of love. Stand still, O my soul, and consider this full salvation of the Lord—Is it thine?

PROVERBS XXI. 14.

A gift in secret pacifieth anger.

LET me ask, whether I have reason to conclude, that God's just indignation against me, his anger with me as a sinner, is pacified by that obedience which Christ hath given, and by that satisfaction which Christ hath made? is my love of God super-eminent? has Christ the pre-eminence in my affections, as he is the God of salvation? is there no rival in my heart? am I delighting myself in the Lord, mourning the depravity of my heart, the corruption of my nature, looking to Christ only for salvation, glorying in him the Lord my Redeemer, and approaching God the Father by and through him? Then I may, I ought to rejoice in the above sentiment, that a gift in secret hath pacified anger. Ought I not, with humility and thankfulness, to cry out, That gift which Christ gave the Father, in an

obedience unto death, hath pacified his anger towards me ; I see him shewing a reconciled face ; I see here that mercy * and truth have met together, that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Let me feel more affection for this blessed Saviour, and at all times evidence my attachment unto him by an active obedience, by daily putting him on as my wisdom †, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He ‡ must increase ; I must decrease. May he be more glorious in my estimation ; and while, in the mercy of God, I entertain an hope that his anger is turned away, let me live to the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

PSALM IV. 5.

Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

THE yoke of Christ is easy, and the burden he imposes is light ; and this, because he gives the inclination and ability to perform what he requires. The covenant of works cries, This § do, and thou shalt live. Life from doing what no sinner possesses ability for doing. The || gold is become dim, the most fine gold is changed ; and

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

† 1 Cor. i. 36.

‡ John iii. 30.

§ Luke x. 28.

|| Lam. iv. 1.

Branch 22

man made upright, in the image of God, hath ruined himself—marring that image, by transgressing the commandment of his God. The covenant of grace speaks better things; and says, Live, live to the glory of God, who gives thee spiritual life, and breath, and all things. I must then first be endowed with a principle of spiritual life, before I can perform the functions of that life. This principle is God's gift, no less than animal life; it is a spiritual principle, a vital spark that can never be extinguished; it is a part of Christ, communicated from him who giveth this life to whom he will; for the Son * quickeneth whom he will: moreover, it is that very spiritual essence, which the apostle calls a divine nature, which was in Christ as man and mediator: he was anointed with the Spirit without measure; and they who receive this spiritual life from him, are united unto him, and one with him:—He † that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit: and being thus endowed with the Spirit of Christ, which is holy, the person is bringing the sacrifices of righteousness unto the Lord, and putting his trust in the Lord: he brings in faith, the sacrifice appointed in the everlasting purpose of God, which is revealed in the gospel, and pleads it with God, for pardon and for restoration to the divine favour: he pleads Christ's righteousness for justifi-

* John v. 21.

† 1 Cor. vi. 17.

cation, and Christ's blood as his propitiation and atonement; and delighting in holiness, in his inward parts, he * has his fruit unto holiness, and his end shall be everlasting life. Thus scripture speaks of Christ and his redeemed: That as there † is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, so they are known to be in Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If I am thus quickened, thus alive in Christ Jesus, may I not, ought I not to trust in the Lord? He who hath given the greater benefit will give every smaller one; he ‡ that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for me, how shall he not with him also freely give me all things? he will do that which seemeth good in his sight; he will give me that which shall conduce most to my good: I will therefore put my trust in the Lord, and will not fear what man can do unto me; I will, through divine grace, under the influences of the eternal Spirit, offer unto the Lord the sacrifices of righteousness, approaching God with faith in Christ;—while yielding obedience unto Christ, my sovereign, let me remember, in all my approaches to God, to come by him, who is § the way, the truth, and the life—even Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

* Rom. vi. 22.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Rom. viii. 32.

§ John xiv. 6.

PROVERBS XXVII. 26.

The lambs are for thy clothing.

WHAT an indigent creature is man ! what a gracious creator is God ! how full of goodness ! God, foreseeing the wants of man, furnished the world with all things necessary ;— food for his appetites ; raiment to keep his body warm. The lambs are for both ; and the sovereign of creation hath granted man permission to use both ; yea, every * moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things. God himself was pleased to clothe Adam with the skins of beasts. But what is the soul of man ! how numerous its wants ! and what the food and clothing necessary for that ! O my soul, the lamb is for both unto thee ; God hath provided it, foreseeing thy wants, and makes it over to thee by a free and full grant : this lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ, slain from the foundation of the world ; his righteousness is the garment of salvation, provided for thy clothing in the everlasting purpose of thy God ; and his flesh is meat indeed for thy nourishment. Thou art naked by sin, which has despoiled thee of every thing valuable. Art thou hungering after spiritual meat ? In Christ, the

* Gen. ix. 3.

Lamb, are all things treasured up for thee ; God warrants thee to take him, in all his fullness, to thyself. Believe in him, thy righteousness, and thou shalt stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in thy hands.—In thee, O Saviour, would I glory !

JAMES V. 9.

Behold ! the judge standeth at the door.

AND must I appear before him, to have an irreversibile sentence passed upon me ? Awful thought ! Who is this judge ? It is Jesus, the man appointed to judge the world, of * which God hath given assurance, in that he hath raised him from the dead. When will this be ? Speedily : for, behold ! the judge standeth at the door :—There † is but a step between me and death. This judge is omniscient, and cannot be deceived ; he knows every secret thought of the heart. Does Christ know the secret thoughts of my heart ? how then can I stand in judgment before him, since my heart answers to his description of it, and is full of evil ‡ thoughts, murders, adulteries, and all manner of things which defile the man ? how then can I, can any man, stand in judgment before Christ ? Let the word of God

* Acts xvii. 31.

† Sam. xx. 3.

‡ Matt. xv. 19.

answer the question :—Then * shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But who are these righteous? They who are justified freely, through faith, in the righteousness of the God man, Christ Jesus :—By † the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. They are righteous ; and who can stand before God in judgment, but they against whom the law can bring no charges, nor the justice of God any demands ? their motto is, Holiness to the Lord. Lord, thou knowest my soul's desire is after greater conformity to the image of Christ, to be growing in grace ; thou knowest my inward feelings, that I do not love and serve thee more, that I have no hope but what is built on Christ, the Lord my righteousness. Let me live under the full conviction of this truth—Behold ! the judge standeth at the door.

JONAH III. 9.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?

WHAT a view have I here of myself, as a sinner, who, by a variety of acts of rebellion, have been exposing myself to the fierce anger

* Matt. xiii. 43.

† Rom. v. 19.

of the Almighty ! but what a view have I of God, as a gracious and compassionate God, ready to withdraw his judgments, and manifest his mercy to soul-humbled, sin-mourning sinners, and returning prodigals ! Alas ! what am I ? and what is God ? How oft have I sinned ; how frequent my rebellions ; how manifold my transgressions ; and yet how slow to anger, how gracious is God ! still I am a monument of his sparing mercy, on praying ground ; and how gentle the strokes of his rod, which he is laying upon me from time to time. Lord, thou art pouring down thy judgments on the earth, and manifesting thine anger towards the children of men. What are the deserts of Britain thou only knowest, for thou only knowest the sins of its inhabitants. How have I added to the load of national guilt ! how many, how aggravating my sins ! are they not the joint causes of God's having a controversy with the land ? Alas, they are ! Yet, who can tell but God may turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? O for the Spirit Jehovah's prevalence in and over me ; that I may be mourning my sins ; that I may be truly humbled, be more self-abased ; that I may be returning to the Lord, and be resting in him, exercising an habitual godly jealousy over myself, proud self, carnal self, careless secure self, and be giving up myself more wholly to the Lord ! Save me, O my God, from all my enemies !

O deliver not the soul * of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked ! forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever !

ISAIAH XXVII. 3.

Lest any hurt it, I will watch over it night and day.

GRACE beams forth in every word ; mercy shines in every syllable ; and every letter speaks the loving-kindness and the faithfulness of the Lord. How has this scripture been fulfilled in the preservation of the true church of Christ ! how often hath the Lord appeared for it in this land ! Never let me forget the goodness of God in what took place through his wonderful intervention as on this day : a plot hatched in hell, and ripe for execution on earth, frustrated by the kind and merciful interposition of the great head of the church, Jesus the Lord of life and glory. Nor † let me forget the Lord's mercy in being a shield to our present sovereign on the last Thursday, in preserving him from the diabolical intentions of minds inflamed by hell. In this

* Psalm lxxiv. 10.

† The outrages of the mob in his way to the parliament house, and the attempt on his life by a bullet fired from an air-gun, which passed through the side glass of the state-coach.

latter, as well as in the former instance, I see God fulfilling his promise to his church—he does indeed watch over it night and day : it is preserved by him, watered with the momentary bounties of his grace in the continued refreshing showers of his word and of his spirit. What shall I render unto the Lord for making me a vine in this vineyard ? for engrafting me into Christ ? for watering my soul from time to time ? Praise * the Lord, O my soul ! and all that is within me praise his holy name ! Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not any of his mercies, who forgiveth all thine iniquity, and healeth all thy diseases ! and who says, even unto thee : Lest any hurt it, I will watch over it night and day. Alas ! what need is there for divine keeping and preservation ! how many my foes who are artfully endeavouring to deprive me of all comfort and peace ! how varied their mode of attack ! how manifold their devices ! and how weak am I ! how often asleep ! how often exposing myself to their assaults ! Why am I not oftener surprized by them, and taken captive ? why am not I more frequently plundered of all that is valuable, but because the Lord is my keeper ? He watches over me, keeps guard around me, yea, moreover, rouses me from my security, and puts his weapons of warfarè into my hands, and gives me strength,

* Psalm ciii. 1, 2, 3.

skill, and faith, to wield them against my adversaries. Rejoice then, soul, in the Lord that watcheth over thee ! rejoice with trembling ! May humility be, at all times, a striking feature in my life : may I never be indulging a careless indolent spirit, but be always tilling my land ; and, through a divine blessing, find plenty of bread for my soul's nourishment. O Jesus, how solemn thine engagements, and how faithful art thou in fulfilling them ! how often hast thou given me occasion to set my seal to this truth, that thou dost watch over me night and day—in the day of prosperity, in the night of adversity and sufferings ! Glory be to thee for thine every appearance for this land, for thy church in it, and for me an individual member of that church, made so by thy grace, and preserved in it by thy power and mercy. Lord, thou hast delivered, be pleased yet to deliver ; frustrate the devices of all our enemies, restore peace, and send prosperity to thy Zion.

PSALM CXXXV. 7.

He bringeth the wind out of his treasures.

HOW merciful art thou, O my God, that the house, in which, by thy permission, I dwell, was not overthrown by the fury of the tempest last night ! how many of my fellow sinners have

sunk like lead in the mighty waters, and closed
 their eyes in everlasting darkness. I am spared ;
 I am yet living on the earth. What lessons should
 I learn? how short my time is ! how uncertain
 to me the hour of my departure hence ! the next
 storm may be commissioned to spend its fury on
 the house I may be in, and overwhelm me in its
 ruins ; or a tile falling, may fracture my skull,
 and deprive me of life ; a blood vessel may burst ;
 a fly, or gnat, or a hair, may choke me. How
 sure am I of death ! how needful to be prepared !
 Lord, bring forth thy Spirit, out of thy treasures,
 into my soul, and enrich me with his vital power
 and influence ; breathe on me more and more,
 and let me feel his powerful operations, in re-
 moving from me all the poor coverings of my
 own obedience in point of dependance, in over-
 throwing all self-love independent of the love of
 God, purifying my heart, that I may be more
 holy. Awake *, O north wind ; and come thou
 south, and blow upon my garden, that the spices
 may send forth a grateful odour. Let adversity,
 sickness, pain, and disappointments draw off my
 affections more from this world, that they may be
 engaged more on thee ; let prosperity, health, &c.
 work in me a deeper sense of my own unwor-
 thiness, and of thy love, that I may be more de-
 voted to thee ; fill me with thy Spirit, that I may

* Cant. iv. 16.

be thine inwardly in heart, and outwardly in life and conversation. Lord, quicken me more, that I may serve thee better.

PROVERBS VIII. 1.

Doth not wisdom cry ?

YES ; in every part of creation, teaching man some important lesson. To eat and drink only is the life of a brute ; to see God in all things, and to extract some profitable instruction from every thing, and from every circumstance, is living more rationally, more like a man. But with respect to what is required of me as a Christian, as a man professing godliness, doth not wisdom cry and direct ? Yes ; the ox, and the ass, and the horse, come at the appointed hour, and wait on their feeder for that fodder which is necessary for the support of their animal life. Should not I hear wisdom crying unto me by them, to come to Christ the bread of life, to wait upon God at a throne of grace, in an humble expectation that he will give and nourish my soul with that bread which doth not perish, but which endureth unto everlasting life ? These animals, when thirsty, go to their accustomed place, and drink of the water, and are refreshed ; and should not I be continually applying to Christ in the use of the means

of grace, and be drawing* water out of the wells of salvation? The eagle, soaring on high, approaches the sun nearer than any other bird;—should not I be soaring in the regions of meditation, and, by faith, be continually looking unto Jesus, the glorious sun of righteousness? The young ravens cry unto the Lord, and he heareth them;—here I am instructed in the great duty of prayer; my wants are numerous, and it is not in human power to relieve them: God in infinite love, commands me to cry unto him, Ask †, and it shall be given you. The different tribes of fishes live in the waters, the birds inhabit the air, and all exist in their proper element. O let me be always living, as a Christian, in the proper element of holiness, breathing the pure air of the gospel, and nourished by the wholesome waters of the sanctuary. In the colour and nature of the crow I see myself black with sin, and feeding upon the carrion of worldly pleasure; in the fierce lion I see myself under the ungovernable passions of my corrupt nature; in the wolf of the evening I see my voracious greediness after those things which perish in the using; but in the lamb, led to the slaughter, I see the meek Jesus willingly offering up himself a sacrifice for sin; in the newly-shorn and washed sheep I see myself stripped of the filthy rags of my own righteousness, washed

* Isa. xii. 3.

† Matt. vii. 7.

in the blood, and clothed with the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation, which is the work of Christ, the Lord our righteousness, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. In sheep, following their shepherd, I see my duty and privilege to follow Christ, whithersoever he goeth :—he says, My * sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. May I hear wisdom crying unto me in every thing ; and do thou, O holy Spirit, dwell in me, that, under thy teaching, I may be enabled to draw some spiritual instruction from every animal—beasts, birds, fishes, and men ; and also from every occurrence in life. Give me large draughts of spiritual instruction from the constantly flowing fountains of thy providences, thy works in creation, that I may be serving thee, my God and Saviour, more spiritually.

MATTHEW V. 4.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

WHAT a delightful harmony do I perceive in scripture. Does David, in the Old Testament say, He † that goeth forth, and weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ? Christ, in the New Testament, says, Blessed are

* John x. 27;

† Psalm cxxvi. 6.

they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: If then I am mourning my sins before God, if I am mourning that I cannot, that I do not live more to his glory—if I am mourning the absence of my beloved, let me take comfort from my Saviour's gracious declaration, from his compassionate practice. The publican was a mourning sinner: when approaching the temple, under a conviction of his unworthiness and of his vileness, he cried out; smiting upon his breast, God * be merciful to me a sinner. Paul, though a saint, was a mourning sinner, when he said, The † good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Mary mourned her absent Beloved, when the plentiful effusion of her tears prevented her seeing that Lord whose absence she mourned. The publican went down to his house rejoicing in Christ, and rejoicing in expectation of an eternal gracious reward. Paul found comfort from the exercise of faith on Christ, through whom, he was convinced, he should come off more than conqueror; and how did Mary's mourning soul rejoice, when she heard the voice of her Beloved addressing her by her name, Mary ‡! I can only come again, and again, and again, unto this loving and compassionate Saviour, with, God be merciful to

* Luke xviii. 13.

† Rom. vii. 19, 24.

‡ John xx. 16.

me a sinner ! I carry a simular body of death within me wheresoever I am. I too, from time to time, mourn my absent Beloved : O that I did love him more ! O that my soul was also sensibly afflicted at his absence, always longing for and waiting his return ! How oft have I found my Saviour drawing near, and calling back my roving thoughts ! how often have I been calling upon others to trust him at all times, when he hideth his face ; assuring them, on the testimony of his infallible word, that though he hideth his face, he nevertheless is the * God of Israel, the Saviour thereof ; yea, that his very hiding his face, which is the cause of their mourning his absence, is a proof of his love ! My heart is hard—Lord, soften it ; my soul wants piercing—Lord, smite it with a sense of thy love ; my faith is low and little—Lord, increase it, and bring it forth into exercise ; save a poor sinner, lying at mercy's door ! Comfort me, O Lord, with the felicity of thy chosen ones ! thou † hast done great things for me, O lift up the light of thy countenance upon me ! look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name ! enable me to rejoice in the declaration of thy word—Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Lord, comfort me with the consolations of thy Spirit ; and

* Isa. xlv. 15.

† Psalm cxix. 182.

let every instance of thy love make me more self-abased before thee !

MALACHI III. 2.

But who may abide the day of his coming ?

I AM born into the world ; I must die ; I must appear before God in judgment. Awful thought ! Christ is the judge ; who can stand before him ? Riches profit not in the day of the Lamb's wrath ; nor will morality deliver from death ;—but righteousness will—the righteousness, the alone righteousness of God the Redeemer, of Jesus the Saviour. Who shall condemn ? It is God that justifieth—How ? By the righteousness of God by faith, which is to and upon all them that believe ; for there is no respect of persons with God. Whosoever comes, as a poor, perishing, helpless sinner, to Christ for salvation, apprehends Christ as his righteousness, and relies upon him as his atonement, shall be justified ? yea, is already justified in the sight of God ; for there is* now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Soul, seest thou thy vileness, as a guilty sinner ? Christ shed his blood for sinners ; and he is bringing thee, by his Spirit, to that fountain which he hath opened for cleansing. Seest thou

* Rom. viii. 1.

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the law requiring what thou possessest no power for performing? Here is Christ revealed unto thee, The * end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Art thou sensible of thy want of faith? and art thou crying mightily to God for it? The † Lord hear thee in the day of trouble! the name of the God of Jacob defend thee! Art thou by faith putting on Christ thy righteousness, thy garment of salvation? Bring soul, body, duties, and all, to his blood for cleansing, relying upon him as thine advocate with the Father; then thou, even thou, shalt abide the day of his coming; for as thou art accepted of God in him, so shalt thou be rewarded of him.

ISAIAH XL. 7.

The grass withereth.

A STRIKING emblem of man, whose temporal existence is but a withering life. The grass is to-day green and flourishing; to-morrow it is cut down, dried up, and withered. How soon removed! and the place that once knew it shall know it no more. The word of God compares man's life to grass in these respects; and yet how thoughtlessly and inconsiderately does short-lived man pass days, months, and years! busied in

* Rom. x. 1.

† Psalm xx. 1.

vanity, walking * in a vain shew, and disquieting himself in vain. Fair and flourishing as the grass, basking in the sun-shine of prosperity, some violent disease on a sudden pervades every part of his body, and he becomes a prey to death: and yet, while living in a state of separation from God, of what vast importance does he think himself. Alas! under selfish influence, I have known much of this; but glory to him who hath made me to know myself, to feel my emptiness; and who induced me to seek after the pearl of great price, and which endureth for ever. This pearl has an essential quality in it; it communicates spiritual and eternal life to every one who is in possession of it—hence it is a life-giving stone: it really turns all into gold—losses, crosses, afflictions, trials, temptations; from these bitters it enables the person to extract sweetness, and, by fresh communications, maintains that spiritual life which it first gave. This spiritual life never withereth, because hid in him who is the resurrection and the life:—Who is this? It is Jesus, the everlasting God, who, by his Spirit, creates the sinner again, makes him, who was dead in sin, alive unto God, and thus conveys into him an everlasting principle of life. This is that † word of the Lord which endureth for ever. What an inestimable, valuable life must this be? am I a par-

* Psalm xxxix. 6.

† 1 Peter iv. 25.

taker of it by an union with this Jesus? has he put his Spirit within me? how may I know it? what is my chief bent, my inclination, my desire? do spiritual thoughts prevail? and desires to grow more and more into the likeness and image of Jesus Christ abound? Surely these are signs of life. O that I may find all these increasing! and that though my body grow feeble, wax old, and decay, I need not fear the approach of death; I should rather rejoice that my dying life was departing, and my entrance into my heavenly inheritance approaching. Persecution, like a fire, may scorch, but cannot consume; temptations may arise, but Christ will make a way for my escape; Satan may throw his fiery darts, they shall not kill, because the Lord Jesus is my strength and my shield. Under increasing years, and declining strength of constitution, may my faith and hope be strong in Jesus the captain of my salvation; and when this withering life is expiring, may I be enabled to glory in Christ my Redeemer, and triumph over all mine enemies conquered by him. In the rejoicings of faith, may I cry with the church, Make* haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.

* Cantic, viii. 14.

LUKE XVII. 32.

Remember Lot's wife.

MAN is frail, liable to fall; God hath warned him thereof. Satan is a busy adversary, continually watching his opportunity, always diligent in his business; the malice of his heart against Christ is never at rest: how often does he represent to the believer, that the difficulties before him are insurmountable, that he is too weak to stand, too prone to evil to withstand, and hence would persuade him to turn back:—Come, let us make a captain, and return to Egypt, for then was it better with us than now. If he can bring the poor trembling believer to view every thing in the magnifying glass of impossibility, he gains his end of perplexing him, of distressing him: if he is brought to look backward, he hears the voice of mercy addressing him,—Remember Lot's wife; he begins to reflect on the goodness of God, and on his faithfulness, who did bring him, out of worse than Egyptian darkness, into marvellous light, out of slavery into the liberty of the gospel: he reasons with himself—
if I return to my former ways of sin, I shall be despised, even by the wicked; besides, were not those ways tormenting to my soul? did they not make the very thoughts of death a torment? did they not make the idea of a day of judgment

painful ? He considers the Saviour, looks * to him, and finds encouragement to go forward ; he relies upon Jesus, the captain of his salvation, and keeps pressing † forward for the prize of his high calling. Lord, let it be thus with me !

MALACHI IV. 2.

Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.

HOW diseased is man, as devoid of the fear of the Lord ! and when God has implanted that disposition within him, he becomes, under the exercise of it, more and more sensible of his disease. By † the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil, exercise a godly jealousy over themselves, and make continual application to Christ : by this fear a person is led to self-examination ; and when he comes to look into self, and to examine, with a view to discovery, what does he see ? That a spiritual disease has pervaded every part of him ; that he is wholly infected ; that he is in himself all over leprous, all § over wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores ; he feels a disordered imagination, and a distempered fancy, wild desires, and sinful thoughts, violent appetites,

* Heb. xii. 2.

† Phil. iii. 14.

‡ Prov. xvi. 6.

Isa. i. 6.

and strong sensual inclinations, fiery lusts, and icy affections; he feels, mourns, prays, and wrestles with God for that health and cure which is by Jesus Christ; he fears lest all these corruptions should cause his Beloved to withdraw; he fears lest he should be overcome by these prevailing in their turns, to the distressing his mind, bringing guilt upon his soul, and disgrace upon the ways of his God; he is led to wait on God at a throne of grace, and plead for the fulfilment of the promise in the text, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon him, with healing in his wings: he knows the need of this, and relies upon God for the manifestation of his faithfulness, in the communications of every supply out of the Redeemer's fullness: he fears God, and is relying upon Christ; yet convinced that by death only he can be fully and perfectly freed from his spiritual disease, he is looking, by faith, to Christ, for victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; he considers the efficacy of the balm of Gilead, the blood of Immanuel, and makes constant application to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. Let me fear and love thee, O my God, at all times; and let me feel, in every season of darkness, and under every stirring of sin, Jesus, the sun of righteousness, arising upon my soul, with healing in his beams; that the bright beams of his love, darting upon and warming my soul, I may feel my affections warm to him, my

disposition, inclination, imagination, and desire, more spiritual ; that my heart may be bubbling up spiritual thoughts, and my tongue at liberty to sound the praises of redeeming love. Heal, Lord, my meditation, that it may be always of thee ; yea, so give thyself to me, and so give me faith in thee, that I may be constantly evidencing I am a tree of righteousness of thy planting, flourishing under thy watering, and bringing forth fruit abundantly to thy glory : if caustics are needful, grant that patience may have its perfect work —only let me be made whole.

GENESIS I. 31.

And God saw every thing that he had made ; and, behold, it was very good.

ALL God's works must be good, because all come forth of infinite goodness. The world, and all the things therein, call upon man to consider God, to consider his wisdom, power, and goodness. How do the different inhabitants of water, earth, and air, demonstrate the wisdom of God in their formation, with vessels suited to the particular element which they more particularly inhabit ! The crawling worm, concealed in the dark recesses of the earth ; the strong pinioned eagle, soaring aloft in the air ; the whale, sporting in the mighty waters ; exhibit the wisdom and

power of God. Nor less the various tribes which possess vegetative life: the tree aspiring upward, and grass of low growth, are subservient to the different purposes for which they were ordained of God:—But man, made superior to all animal creation, in his formation, wisdom, and power shine; and goodness appears in the provision wherewith the world was furnished for him previous to his creation;—man, the last, but noblest work of creation;—man, made in the image of God, as to moral rectitude, righteousness, and true holiness;—man, made more especially for God, who deigned to hold familiar converse with him;—good, indeed, as thus formed of God, and to be viewed and contemplated with wonder, and with love of God. Yet, alas, how often do I see the different orders of creation, without seeing God in them! how seldom do I consider that I am* fearfully and wonderfully made! how seldom think of, and how less frequently contemplate God in my formation, and in my subsistence! Why this inattention? why this sinful non-observance? Alas! what is man? how changed from what he once was! how differing from that image in which he was created! How does the idea of drawing into the more immediate presence of God, in retirement from the world, fill his spirit with heaviness? and the

* Psalm cxxxix. 14.

thought of meeting God after death excite dread in his soul? are not these proofs of that change which the scriptures assert to have taken place in man, that he is spiritually dead? else whence his affection for and delight in worldly things, instead of affection for and delight in God? why loathing piety, and loving folly, instead of loving God who made him, and evidencing that love by obedience? The temple is indeed defiled; sin hath entered, and all is polluted. Yet grace superabounds where sin hath abounded: Christ, the provided, appointed Saviour and Redeemer, says, Behold*! I make all things new:—this, by his Spirit, who quickens the dead in sin, communicates unto them a spiritual vital principle, reveals Christ to them, and in them, their only hope of glory; they see spiritually his suitableness; they hear the glad tidings of salvation by him; the † favour of his name is as ointment poured forth; they taste his loving-kindness; they feel his word to be the power of God to their soul's salvation. Soul, is it thus with thee?

* Rev. xxi. 5.

† Cant. i. 3.

GENESIS II. 2.

And he rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made.

REMEMBER the seventh day to keep it holy. It was a sign between God and the Israelites : and is it not a sign between God and Christians ? did not Christ religiously observe it, and thereby enforce a correspondent practice ? Are not the glory of God, and the concerns of the soul, important subjects to engage our attention ? shall not he, who gives me all my time, and all my powers of action, have that portion of them which he requires ? yea, which it is my privilege to give up to him ? Lord, so evangelize me, soul, spirit, and body, that I may always rejoice in thy returning sabbath ! Thou hast often refreshed my soul in thy sanctuary, and blessed me with an holy humble liberty in privately preparing for the service of that day ; hence I would conclude, from what thou hast done, that thou wilt again bless the work of the day to me. O Lord, keep me waiting at wisdom's door ! let me feel, as thy servant of old, under every invitation to thy sanctuary :—I was * glad when they said, let us go into the house of the Lord. Is it not of the Lord's appointing ? is not social worship reviving,

* Psalm cxii. 1.

animating? does not the Lord meet with his people, and bless them in his house of prayer, giving to each one their portion of meat in due season? are they not enabled, in the exercise of faith, to draw water from the wells of salvation? Refresh my soul with the kindly showers of thy grace, work, and Spirit: and while, in compliance with thy command, I am endeavouring to water others, do thou graciously water my soul.

PSALM CXLVII. 16.

He scattereth the hoar frost-like ashes.

HOW seasonable the changes of heat and cold! they prevail alternately for the benefit of mankind. The frost, by its piercing cold, destroys thousands of insects, which would injure the seed in the ground before it grew, or destroy the blade when it did shoot forth: the hoar covering the blade, on its first appearance, protects it from the severity of the frosty air, which would destroy it: frost meliorates the ground, whereby it is rendered more fit for the reception of the seed; and at the same time rots and destroys ten thousand weeds, and seeds of weeds, or so checks them in their growth, that they do not choke the corn afterwards. What a striking resemblance in the works of nature and grace! what an an-

swerable working in the latter to the former ! The ground of the human heart, by the chilling cold of adversity and distress, is not unfrequently prepared of God thereby for receiving the seed of his precious word ; the heart that was cleaving to itself and the world is thereby loosened from its natural bonds of pride and false security, and brought to recollection ; and painful recollection brings on desire, and a waiting on God for instruction ; the worms of pride, carelessness, and presumption are enfeebled ; and the humbled sinner becomes earnest in his enquiry after salvation : he reads, he hears—he receives the seed of divine truth, sown by the Spirit Jehovah ; the sun of righteousness arises upon him ; the warm Southern breezes of the Spirit blow upon him ; his icy heart is melted ; the seed germinates ; and his soul enlivened, he rejoices in Christ, the God of his salvation—Comfort abounds ; he walks by sense ; his feelings are alive :—Soon, very soon, the sun is eclipsed : he finds his fervour abated, his frames varying, and his comforts declining ; here the cold operates strongly, and by its operation he feels the worm of spiritual pride enervated : he thought his mountain stood strong—wondered that it was not the same with others who had been longer in the ways of God ; a stranger to his own heart, and to the working of spiritual pride, he now learns the necessity of the exercise of faith under the different struggles that he feels within

him, and he comes humbled to God, praying that his faith may be lively : he now has recourse to the promises of God, considers his faithfulness, and again finds the sun of righteousness shining upon him, and the Spirit's breezes cheering his soul, and reviving the work of grace in him ; he again rejoices in the Lord, and glories in the God of his salvation. Does he find any thing within to humble him ? He roots deeper in Christ ; is brought to rely more upon Christ ; he acknowledges, from conviction, that God is wise in all his dealings with him. What is his prayer ? That he may increase in humility, and be growing under the influence of the sun of righteousness. Thus God deals in mercy with his redeemed ? What know I of these things ? I can bless God for affliction, trials, losses ; they have been sanctified.—Glory be to God !

MATTHEW XXVIII. 18.

*And Jesus came, and shake unto them, saying :
All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

THEN Jesus must be God ; for none but God possesseth all power. Here then I come with the publican's plea, being assured that, by the exercise of thy power, thou canst, and, by the mani-

festation of thy grace, thou wilt forgive my sins, while I cry unto thee—God* be merciful unto me a sinner; for thou art exalted at the right hand of God, to † grant repentance and remission of sins. How compassionately does the Saviour God address the poor sorrowing soul, who is writing bitter things against itself, and increasing its wretchedness by drawing false conclusions: Come ‡ now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red, like crimson, they shall be as wool; because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. What a sovereign remedy is this! how divinely appointed! how divinely applied! But who are the persons that may come? and what their warrant? Christ says, Come § unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Here is an invitation to sinners of a certain description; and a gracious declaration that they shall be pardoned. Art thou a sinner invited to come? Then let nothing hinder thee; since it is further written, Whosoever || will, let him take the water of life freely; and him ¶ that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Exercise thy power, O Jesus Lord, in subduing my sinful nature, in cleansing my polluted soul, in renewing my strength, that I

* Luke xviii. 13.

† Acts v. 31.

‡ Isa. i. 18.

§ Matt. xi. 28.

|| Rev. xxii. 17.

¶ John vi. 37.

may run, and not be weary, that I may walk,
and not faint.

PROVERBS XXVII. 1.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow.

HOW uncertain are all things here below !
what frequent changes ! how many are
numbered with the dead since the last setting sun !
Mortality, what art thou ? The insatiate grave
is continually calling for more. How soon will
the hand that writes this be deprived of motion !
Surely then recollection is needful, and confide-
ration proper ; both needful and proper for one
who is in a dying state ; for one whose pulse must
soon cease to beat ; whose breath must soon cease
to be drawn. What is at the end of life ? Eter-
nity. And what is eternity ? Always existing,
and never nearer an end—Heaven and hell :—the
inhabitants of the former how blessed ! of the
latter how miserable ! Can I be indifferent who
are to be my companions and associates in another
state ? are happiness and misery to be accounted
trifles ? What is acute bodily pain ? The hope
it may soon cease is alleviating. What is the suf-
fering of body and soul in hell, without any ex-
pectation of relief ; yea, with a sense of its never-
ending existence ? O my soul, consider, and fly
for refuge to that Jesus which is set before thee in

the gospel. Jesus Lord, hide me under the shadow of thy wings. Thou didst, in mercy to my soul, call me a wandering sheep, and bring me back to thy fold : suffer me not to turn again to folly ; give me grace to work while it is day ; keep me looking to thee, and leaning upon thee, my soul's beloved ; and, by thy Spirit's powerful operation, change me more into thine image, that, when thou comest, I may be found ready.

JUDE 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

DO these words address me ? The love of God has heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, which cannot be fully comprehended by a finite being, by a poor worm of yesterday, crushed before the moth. Can it be that such an one is brought to know and feel something of it ? to partake of that grace in salvation, the effect of God's love ? Astonishing grace ! rich mercy ! amazing love ! God * so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not die, but have everlasting life. Love shines here with peculiar lustre ; sinners are redeemed from the curse of the

* John iii. 16.

law, and brought near unto God; heirs of misery are rendered heirs of happiness in a kingdom of glory. Am I a partaker of this grace? has God manifested his love to me in that redemption, which is by his Son's obedience unto death? am I brought into a state of acceptance with God, clothed, and washed, and sanctified? Why then do I feel sin stirring within me? why do outward temptations fall like a spark upon my inward depravity, and set all on fire? why do I parley with the enemy, and encourage him to go on attacking me? are these proofs that I know the love of God? that God hath revealed his love to me? What shall I say? what conclusion must I draw? Are these things so? I cannot deny them. How am I affected under the sense of them? is it painful? does it cause mourning before God that I am thus? does it bring me to cry mightily unto the Lord for grace and strength to resist, and for the Spirit to work in me conformity to him who is holy? Surely then I am keeping in the love of God, or rather I am kept there, looking to a God of love for every manifestation of it to me a sinner, and that I may be kept looking unto Jesus, the gift of that love, for continued mercy. What can this world do towards satisfying the immortal desires of the soul? towards keeping alive in the soul a sense of the divine love and complacency? Nothing. The word of God, faith in that word, reliance on the

faithfulness of God, and looking unto Jesus, bring strength into the soul, and invigorate the flame nearly extinguished by the violent struggles of corruption within, and the assaults of temptations from without. What remains for such a poor, tried, tempted, assaulted, weak believer? To cast himself again upon God; to consider the end, viz. eternal life, the gift of God in his Son Jesus Christ; to have respect * unto the recompence of the reward. These views of God in Christ keep hope alive, fix in the mind a deeper sense of God's love, and confirm an expectation of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. —Lord, keep me in thy love.

GENESIS IV. 17

And he builded a city.

WHAT subterfuges do men make use of to get rid of the convictions, the stings of conscience! as if building a city could so far engage the attention, that the thought of murder should never obtrude itself into the mind! A wounded † conscience who can bear? like an evil Spirit it haunts every place; wherever the person is he feels it, and is terrified. Is this a case uncommon? or was it peculiar to Cain?

* Heb. xi. 26.

† Prov. xviii. 14.

Alas, is it not the case of most persons under the accusations of a quickened conscience? under a sense of sin and of iniquity? under a conviction of murder? Every transgressor is a murderer; a murderer of his own soul; a self-murderer. How wretched the situation of the children of Adam! all * have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and all, under an awakened conscience, are flying to one expedient, as they think, or another, to get rid of the stings of conscience. How oft is recourse had to diversions, which, instead of healing, increase the wound; and the person afterwards feels increasing pangs from the faithful accusations of conscience. Another has recourse to a long round of duties and religious services, building a city which cannot shelter him from the wrath of God, no, nor secure him from the recurring convictions of conscience. A third builds partly on Christ, and partly on self; yet he gets no peace; still the chief materials are wanting; and having spent all his living upon such kinds of physicians, he is miserable, and wretched, and naked. The nightly bowl, the dark revels, the chaunting voice, the tuneful viol, and syren pleasure, are resorted unto, but all in vain; no other end is obtained than increasing guilt and accusation. What is man that he should act thus, and more insensibly than the animal

* Rom. iii. 23.

to whom, under providence, he is indebted for his subsistence? Is the serpent-bitten hart parched with thirst and heat? he flies to the river, and there finds relief in the appointed remedy. Is the ox worried with the biting gad-fly? he applies to the remedy appointed, and, hastening to the thicket, gets rid of the tormentor:—But man hears of a certain remedy, is instructed to make the trial, yet refuses; he will follow his own devices; and what is the end? He is more wretched, more miserable, more hopeless. Christ is the remedy; his blood, sprinkled upon the conscience, purges it from dead works, to serve the living God; the heart is purified by faith in this blood; it is a fountain flowing, from all eternity, for the benefit of convinced sinners, who, by the Spirit's convictions, are sensible of the guilt contracted by sin; burnt with the venom of the old serpent, and bitten by him, their deadly wounds are to be healed in no other way. Look then, my fellow sinner, under all the accusations of thy conscience, unto Jesus Christ, and be healed. Look, O my soul, under every sense of thy backslidings, to this same Jesus: his blood, when apprehended by faith, removes the greatest load of guilt. O Israel*, thou hast destroyed thyself, been guilty of murdering thy soul! but is thy case irremediable? No—In me, says God, is thy help,

* Hof. xiii. 9.

JOHN XVIII. 8.

If therefore ye seek me, let these go away:

HOW consistent ought the life of a Christian to be, since he is described as a light shining in a dark place ! how prone the heart of man to hold fast those things which he ought to put away ! Seekers of Christ ought to be followers of Christ. Hence it is written : Lay* aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. It is my duty, then, to give up all for Christ, and my privilege to be continually seeking Christ : depart, then, ye sinful and lustful desires, ye vile robbers of my peace, and disturbers of my happiness ; depart, ye carnal, earthly, sensual invaders of my soul ; go away, and break not in when I would be meditating upon my Saviour God. What satisfaction can ye give ? Ye promise much, but ye give nothing : syren like, ye allure only to kill. Depart ; for Jesus has a claim, an absolute claim to all my affections. What has he done ? Died a sacrifice for my sins. What says he to me, his follower ? If † ye seek me, let

* Heb. xii. 1.

† John xviii. 8.

these go away. What say I? Crucify them! crucify them! What says the world, the flesh, and the evil one? Shall I crucify your kings, that have so long exercised dominion? Yes; crucify them! crucify them! Other * Lords have had dominion over me; but now by thee only, O blessed Jesus, will I make mention of thy name. The mob came to apprehend Jesus, who willing to drink the bitter cup given him by his Father, and unwilling that any of his faithful followers should be injured, rebuked the armed multitude:— If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way. He is the same preserving Christ at all times. Shall I not then follow him?

PROVERBS XXVIII. 19.

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread.

IT is a mercy that man is ordained to eat bread by the sweat of his brow; that he has something of necessity to do, whereby the mind is engaged. Idleness is alike unprofitable and destructive. The hand of the diligent maketh rich; and he that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread. Does not this sentiment extend beyond the cultivation of the fields? even to the intellectual faculties of the human mind? What are these

* Isa. xxvi. 13.

without cultivation? Savages in their state of barbarism shew; yea, the practices of mankind, in countries called enlightened, also demonstrate that cultivation is necessary; men of science are not unfrequently sour, morose, austere; men of polished manners the subjects of violent tempers; the greatest refinements in human learning leave strong passions in the human breast, which break forth on the most trivial occasions. Let me consider this sentiment of Solomon, as addressed to me concerning my soul's eternal concerns; that work which is necessary for a growing acquaintance with God, a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of my God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let me be diligent in the use of means, drawing* water from the wells of salvation, drawing supplies out of Christ's inexhaustible fullness, looking unto him my great example, and relying upon him for spiritual fruitfulness, through the work of his Spirit in me. O, may I be hiding the word of my God within me, that I may never depart from him! Deliver me, O Lord, from all slothfulness of Spirit, and give me thy grace, that I may be giving all diligence in making my calling and election sure!

* Isa. xlii. 3.

PSALM XXXIII. 1.

Praise is comely.

LET me be wearing this garment wheresoever I am, while I am what I am, a monument of God's sparing mercy out of hell. The water which runs by the door of another person is equally valuable and useful as that I buy by the pail-full. Common mercies are not in themselves less valuable because common. What a mercy is it to be indulged with the use of those limbs, which have so often carried me to scenes of dissipation, to carry me now to the house of God ! that my reason, so often destroyed by my sin for a season, should now be continued to be exercised on the noblest subjects ! that my affections, debauched by the world's vanities and sinful desires, should be spiritualized, and fixed on a supreme object, even on God my Maker, who giveth me songs * in the night ! Surely then I ought to be thankful for every mercy ; but especially for covenant mercies in Christ Jesus, the God of my salvation. Lord, what am I, that † thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am ? My ‡ Father's house were all but as dead men before thee ; yet thou hast, in mercy to my soul, quickened it with thy Spirit. Blessed

* Job xxxv. 10.

† 2 Sam. ix. 8.

‡ 2 Sam. xix. 28.

Jesus! what shall I say of thee, and for thee? but for thee I had been lying under the curse of thy law; I had been a monument of my God's everlasting vengeance. Love, mercy, and faithfulness intervened between me and everlasting damnation, and plucked me, a brand, out of the burning. O what shall I render to thee! I will praise thee my God and Saviour; I will * take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. Praise this Lord, O my soul, who is altogether lovely, altogether precious!

JOHN XVI. 14.

He will guide you into all truth.

GRACIOUS declaration to a soul thirsting for the truth as it is in Jesus! Lord, what am I, that thou shouldst excite in me a desire to know this truth; to be made free by it:—a free man in him, who hath said, the † truth shall make you free. To thee, O thou Spirit Jehovah, do I look for the fulfilment of this declaration in me! I trust thou hast both enlightened my understanding, and enlivened my soul, that I have been called by thee to the ministry of thy word, and that I know something of thy divine teaching: yet, Lord, so

* Psalm cxvi. 13.

† John viii. 32.

great is my ignorance, that I know nothing yet as I ought to know; I feel my ignorance, and I acknowledge it; and I come to thee for instruction, and for guidance; I plead the promise of my Saviour, and pray—Guide me, even me, into all truth; deliver and keep me from all error in opinion and practice; open * mine eyes to behold the wonderful things of thy law; increase in me spiritual light; and keep me, that I make not shipwreck of my faith, by sailing against the sunken rocks of restraining prayer—inward pride, secret carelessness, or inattention to the ways of God. I know, in a measure, what an enemy self is to me; how the inward corrupt principle is pleading for indulgence. Do thou, O Holy Spirit, quicken me more, and guide me into all truth! teach me then, and comfort me, O thou heavenly paraclete! that I may be increasing in heavenly wisdom, that I may be living the truth, to the glory of my Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit!—guide me through time, and then receive me to glory!

* Psalm cxix. 18.

PROVERBS XXX. 26.

The conies are but a feeble flock, yet make they their houses in the rocks.

HEREIN I see the just description of a real Christian; such as I ought to be; such as I wish to be; and such as, through the grace of God, in a certain degree I am. Feeble I feel myself to be, and I acknowledge it. This sense of my feebleness drives me to the rock Christ Jesus, in the clefts of which, put by the grace of God, and kept in the exercise of a living faith, I am secure. Here, however, the cunning fox, even the old serpent, assails me; but his very attacks force me to keep closer to my refuge. Yet, alas! how often, like the conies, do I come forth from my place of safety, and expose myself to that enemy who goeth about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour! and how frequently am I scared by his approach, and driven again into my rock! again I venture forth, trusting to my own strength, and imagining I shall be able to escape if he does make a bold attack: but, alas! I soon feel his power; and assaulted with his fiery darts, I find myself wounded.—Now lame, and crawling back again, I am convinced that the * race is not to the swift, nor the

* Eccles. ix. 11.

battle to the strong, and that the wise man cannot glory in his wisdom; convinced of my folly, I smart with the painful wound received from mine enemy, by exposing myself, incautiously, to the effects of his malice: hence I again learn where my true security lies, and that there is an absolute need that I should be kept in Christ Jesus, by the * mighty power of God, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus, unto salvation. And yet how feeble my faith! how feeble my strength! again I am drawn to look to creature helps and human wisdom; and as often as this is done, losing sight of Christ, I have to lament my folly and my ignorance: I go halting; and, seeing the enemy approaching, am the subject of fear and dismay: still struggling in faith, I escape his fury, and reach my strong hold, my place of security; and I find it now to be a refuge † from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the wall. Alas! what am I? Feebleness itself. What is Christ? A sure refuge; the rock of ages; a precious, tried security. What is God? Gracious and merciful; causing prodigals to fly to this rock, Christ Jesus, and preserving them in it; causing backsliders to return again and again into it; and hiding them therein for his own everlasting glory, and for their everlasting consolation. Your ‡ life.

* 1 Pet. i. 5.

† Isa. xxxii. 2.

‡ Col. iii. 3.

is hid with Christ in God—For what? That when he shall appear, ye also may appear with him, yea, with him in glory. Hide me, O Lord, in the clefts of this everlasting rock; keep me close in the bleeding side of this Redeemer, washing myself by faith in his blood, that fountain open for sin and for uncleanness; and eating the honey that is to be gathered from that everlasting rock.

PROVERBS XXVII. 26. 15

The lambs are for thy clothing.

HOW meek, how innocent this creature of the Lord! how subservient to his purpose, in yielding both food and raiment to the sons and daughters of Adam! How beautifully and strikingly does the prophet speak of this creature, when he would lead our thoughts to that Saviour, who is Christ the Lord; the Lord, the sinner's righteousness; the Lord, the sinner's atonement; and for whose sake God dispenses mercy to the vilest sinners:—He* is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. Here I see Jesus, the meek, innocent Lamb of God, performing the work of love and grace, that by his

* Isa. liii. 7.

living and dying sinners might be saved, might be clothed with the garment of salvation. He is the true lamb, who is my clothing, and without whose righteousness, put on me by an act of grace and divine love, and received by faith, I cannot stand accepted of God. How rich this garment ! how beautiful and beautifying this clothing ! Solomon, in all his royal glory, was not arrayed so beautifully and splendidly as a poor sinner, on whom the Redeemer God casts this mantle, a sure token of divine love ; yet, as a spiritual man, Solomon was arrayed with the clothing, furnished by the lamb of God, and gloried in it. I am * black, but comely. Alas, how unseemly a sight must a deformed, polluted sinner be in the sight of that God, before whom the angels veil their faces ! How does the enlightened sinner view his deformity in the fallen creature and practical transgressor ! he sees, he feels how black he is, as he is by † nature a child of wrath, and as by practice he has been doing the black deeds and services of the prince of darkness : but when the Spirit discovers a robe, wove by the great God and Saviour, seamless, perfect, and suitable, and works in him that faith, whereby he takes and wraps himself in it, he glories in this—that Christ is the Lord his righteousness ; and, by the progressive work of the same Spirit, he is looking

* Cantic. i. 5.

† Eph. ii. 3.

forward to that day, when he shall, in this clothing, stand approved of God, and be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb. While with the eye of faith he views this robe, his heart and his soul being alive to God, he sees, feels, and mourns his own blackness. The more the believer views this garment, the greater discoveries he makes of his own deficiencies, the more sensible he is of the want of it; the clear and shining splendor of this white discovers the darkest shades of his own blackness. Gracious God, let this beauty* of the Lord my God be upon me! I praise thee, thou Lamb of God, my Saviour and my God, for this robe, so spotless, so pure! Let me be always honouring thee by glorying in thee, the Lord my righteousness!

ACTS IX. 9.

He was three days without sight.

ALAS! how many years did I live in darkness, and delight in doing the works of darkness, having no light in my understanding, and having fellowship with the unfruitful works and workers of darkness. What was the fruit thereof? Truly bitter; stings of conscience painful and severe. O the goodness, forbearance, and

* Psalm xc. 17.

mercy of my God ! not to cut me off in my sins, but to spare me, that he might give me light, make me willing in the day of his power, call me with the effectual vocation of his Spirit, quicken me, and induce me to seek to know him, yea, to give me that knowledge of himself in Christ Jesus, which is eternal life ! Lord, what am I, that thou shouldest thus look upon me, and visit me with thy salvation ? how great is thy goodness, and how wonderful thy mercy, to pluck such a polluted, self-destroying, God-dishonouring sinner, as a brand out of the burning ! to save a soul destroying itself deliberately, wilfully, perseveringly ! What shall I render to thee for that spiritual light thou hast given me ? I will bless thee, the God of light ! and praise thee, thou glorious sun of righteousness ! yet, Lord, I see but very imperfectly, though I do see ; for this I can say, that whereas I was blind I now see ; I see sin to be exceeding sinful, and Christ to be exceeding glorious, the only Saviour of sinners ; I see something of thy glory in the face of Jesus ; I see so much beauty in holiness, that I earnestly long to be conformed to the likeness of Christ.

PROVERBS XIII. 10.

Only by pride cometh contention.

17
HOW full of pride then am I ! so constantly contending for my own will ! so discontented if things do not turn out as I would have them ! Oh, this proud heart of mine ! how frequently would it revolt from Jesus, and take glory to itself ! or why such self-complacency in duty, such putting the idol self upon the back ? yet how soon barren and lifeless in duty ; prayer a task ; reading a burden ; meditation irksome ; thoughts roving ; strange ideas rushing into the mind ; all creating wonder and brooding discontent ! How is it that I feel thus ? that I should be the subject of such unpleasant feelings ? Alas, pride ! darest thou erect thyself upon the throne of my rebellious heart, and contending with the Almighty, dispute his authority ? and say, why hast thou made me thus ? why am I thus dealt with ? surely it had been better for me to have gone on smoothly ? How little do I know of the Lord's goodness ! by his permitting it to be thus with me I become more emptied of self, and more dependent on Christ through his blessing ; self is depressed and disclaimed, and Christ is more exalted ; soon worldly thoughts rush in like

a torrent, seem to carry before them all resignation to the will of God, and proud self cries, Why is my situation thus? would not more prosperous circumstances be better? such things were undertaken with a good view, and how have they turned out? Nay, but who art thou, O proud man, that darest thus to dispute the authority of thy Maker? and, indulging thy pride, contend with him? be still; and know that I am God. Lord, give me grace to lie before thee, as clay in the hands of the potter.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 19.

My God shall supply all your needs.

WHAT a fullness is there in Christ! and how adequate to every demand that can be made upon him by the sinner, who, under the teaching of the eternal Spirit is made sensible of his numerous wants, and by the same Spirit is taught to apply to Christ for relief and supplies! O Lord, I want all thou canst give me in and by thy Son Jesus Christ! mine* iniquities are more than the hairs of my head! in Christ thou dost pardon sin—O multiply thy pardons to the full.

* Psalm xl. 12.

extent of all my sins, that, thy Spirit sealing them unto me, I may be enabled to rejoice in Christ my atonement ! But I want also an obedience answerable to all the just demands and exactions of thy law ; in myself I am totally destitute : there is not one single action or transaction of my life, or in the whole course of my conduct towards thee, but what, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, will be found deficient. O then supply me with that all-perfect obedience of thy Son's, which will justify me in thy sight ! under thy warrant I come ; and by faith of divine operation I would again believe in him as the Lord my righteousness. Give me, I beseech thee, increasing faith in Christ, that, under all my wants, I may be drawing, out of his fullness, those supplies which I need : give me grace for grace, and strength for strength : give me what thou seeest to be needful for me ;—faith * working by love ; hope † making not ashamed ; filial fear in habitual exercise ; grace to deny myself ; to take up the cross daily, and to follow Christ Jesus ; patience, that it may have its perfect work ; and every grace and gift of the Spirit, in the exercise of which I may be adorning the doctrine of my God and Saviour : give me under trials support ; under troubles relief ; in distress reliance upon

* Gal. v. 6.

† Rom. v. 5.

thee; under the workings of sin within me, grace to resist; when assaulted by Satan, strength to hold out; when impressed with a deeper sense of my unworthiness, vileness, and guilt, and, when all creature comforts fails, grace to apply to that inexhaustible fountain the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord, I again intreat thee to make me all thou canst make a sinner in Christ Jesus! I want to feel Christ more precious unto my soul; I need to be continually looking to him; to be leaning upon him: bless me with increasing spiritual light, that I may see more of that suitableness which is in Christ, and more of the glory of God in him. Lord, give me gracious riches and divine honours, those which come from thee, that, being thus honoured of my God, I may be enabled to let my light shine before men, and to live to thy glory—to lay out myself in thy service: clothe me with humility; give me meekness and love; give me thyself—thy Christ, as my all in all, in all seasons, in all places, in all circumstances, that I may find thou, O my Saviour God, art supplying all my needs.

AMOS IX. 9.

Lo ! I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve ; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

HAPPY they who are Israelites indeed, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the children of God by regeneration and by adoption : happy are they, though the world ridicule them, though exposed to fiery trials and painful afflictions ; these shall only purify them by purging away their dross ; and, under the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, they shall come forth as gold ; for he, who sits as a refiner's * fire, will purify the sons of Levi ; then shall they offer the sacrifice of righteousness unto the Lord their God. The Israelites, God's ancient people, are scattered over the earth, among all nations ; the sheep of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls are here and there afflicted, persecuted, suffering ; but not one shall be wanting when Christ maketh up his jewels. Why are they here in an afflicted state ? But because they do not set a proper value upon, and make a right use of their privileges : under their afflictions and dispersions they learn to depend more upon Christ ; they look more to his

* Mal. iii. 2.

fullness for all they want. How did David long and pant for the returning opportunities of social worship, when driven from his capital, and from the temple, by his rebellious son! he was wandering about his country, and envied the swallow and the sparrow their temporary residence in the house of God! Hereby believers are more confirmed this is not their rest, here they have no continuing city; and are more mindful of that rest which awaiteth the people of God, when they have passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Let me, at this time, consider the black clouds which are hovering over England, and over the church of God; and which threaten times of scattering, dispersion, and sifting; and ask, Who, and what am I? Am I an Israelite by the Spirit's operation on my soul? am I a follower of the despised Jesus, a minister of the sanctuary of the Lord's making, and not merely of man's ordaining? I trust by the grace of God I am that I am. Let me expect to be sifted; but let me, under all my trials, be relying upon God, faithful and unchangeable, the * same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And what says the Lord? Not the least grain shall fall upon the earth—only the dust of my pride, vanity, self-sufficiency, and coldness and deadness I feel from time to time, shall be removed, that my service

* Heb. xiii. 8.

may be more pure, my faith may be more strong and evident, my hope more confirmed, and my love more cordial. Are these the precious effects of God's sifting his Zion? Lord, thou knowest I long and desire to feel all these effects in me; and if it be thy will, that they cannot be wrought in me but by affliction and suffering, O give me resignation to thy will! Do, Lord, what seemeth good unto thee, so I may but love, serve, and believe better.

ISAIAH II. 22.

Cease ye from man.

WHAT constant care is my God taking to teach me this important lesson! and what a dull scholar am I! I have been lately receiving instruction at on my return to I have another lesson upon the same subject, in the conduct of a flaming professor, as I had before in the conduct of a rich man. I come, therefore, unto thee, O Lord, all dependence upon creatures I renounce, and rely upon thee for every dispensation thou seest to be good and profitable for me. Fifteen years thou hast been teaching me to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. In temporals and spirituals let me never lose sight of my God, but always look, by prayer and supplication, for his direction and

bleſſing. There is a man, Jeſus, the Son of God, whoſe title is The Saviour: for me this Child* is born, to me I truſt this Son is given;—to him I come, on him I rely, in him I confide for grace and glory, for victory over all my carnal deſires, ſenſual inclinations, earthly paſſions, and worldly mindedneſs. Oh, that I may be daily more crucified to the world, and every thing that may bring a cloud between me and Chriſt my beloved! Oh, for more fellowſhip and communion with my God, that I may be drawn more to my Saviour, my Redeemer, truſting to him at all times, and in every ſituation, waiting on him in prayer, faith, praiſe, and love!

MATTHEW XI. 29. 21

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

ALAS, how unlike my Saviour am I! I am a man of an haſty ſpirit; how often am I betrayed by it to act inconfiſtent with my Chriſtian character! Woe is me that ſuch vile inmates ſhould dwell in my breaſt; that they ſhould thus fly forth to the diſhonouring that cauſe which I wiſh to live and die in the ſupport of, according to my feeble and poor abilities! How happy the man,

* Iſa. ix. 6.

who, by faith in Christ Jesus, getteth the victory over himself, whose pride is kept in a measure subservient to the will of God! What is hastiness of Spirit? is it not the second born of hell—the bantling of pride? Why am I angry? but because my pride is not gratified? because I do not find my will obeyed? Is this a proof that my will is brought into subjection to the will of God?—a fellow-mortal refuses to fulfil his agreement; I am angry, and indulging an unbecoming warmth of temper. Ah, how might God be displeased with me for my manifold breaches of covenanted services! how often have I acted more basely towards him!—*Have* I acted? alas! am I not now from time to time *acting*? Surely it becomes me to acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed with his everlasting indignation. Grant, O Lord, I beseech thee, to me such a sense of thy patience and forbearance with me, and of thy mercy towards me, and such a sense of my rebellions against thee, that while I live here a monument of thy sparing, and, I trust, of thy saving mercy, I may be always resisting this inward evil principle, this hastiness of spirit, I may be enabled to tame it; not expecting to do so by the mere strength of carnal reasoning, or my own powers, but relying on, and calling in, by fervent prayer, the aid of the Holy Spirit, that I may be living under his

influences, and, being clothed with humility, may be meek and lowly in spirit. O my Lord and Saviour, how meek wert thou under all the indignities cast upon thee! when thou wast reviled, thou didst not revile again. Give me grace to go and do likewise. Holy Spirit, under the exertion of thy power, let me be growing up into this likeness to Christ, this conformity to his image! O for a lively habitual faith, that I might be always keeping my eye fixed upon Christ as my only example; that I might be checking the rising of every sinful passion within me with;—would a real believer indulge these spirits? is this being like Christ? And may I be able to realize thy presence wheresoever I am, and to hear thy voice, the voice of my Beloved, coming over all opposition to my relief, leaping * upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills, subduing my corruptions, and giving me grace and strength equal to my day, that I may be continually putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

* Cantic. ii. 8.

CANTICLES IV. 16.

*Awake, O North wind! and come thou South and
blow upon my garden!*

WITHOUT thy continued operation and aid,
O Holy Spirit, my pride is rising, and
my graces are withering! High thoughts of self,
the enemy of my soul, is continually injecting,
and as continually endeavouring to make me
think meanly of Christ, as if he were not an all-
sufficient Saviour. Why does he do this? That
he may distress, perplex, and terrify me. I am sen-
sible of my weakness in permitting proud thoughts
to dwell for a moment within me; and feel dis-
tressed that I should ever have a thought dis-
honourable of Christ, as if he were not at all
times the same all-sufficient God and Saviour.
What reason then have I for prayer. Lord, let
the sorrowful * sighing of a prisoner come before
thee; appear for me in every hour of temptation;
and aid me against every assault of the tempter;
that I may be always thinking lowly of myself,
and highly of my Saviour Christ: let all temp-
tations and trials tend to make Christ more pre-
cious, that he may reign in and over me, and I
may be yielding the obedience of love unto him.
Come, Holy Spirit, and, with thy northern blasts,

* Psalm lxxix. 11.

nip the buds of pride, that they may be kept from expanding themselves and producing that bitter fruit which shall bring distress upon my mind ; and so pinch the worm, which is continually gnawing the roots of my spiritual comforts, that I may find I am crucified to all the sinful lusts of the flesh ; yea, Lord, so fan my soul with the warm breezes of thy grace, in the discoveries of my heavenly Father's love, that I may feel joy and peace in believing, and may abound in hope, through thine almighty power. Without thine influence in restraining me, what a poor creature am I ! how empty, and yet how vain and self-glorious ! With thy gracious illumination I find self loathsome, and Christ all-glorious. O then give me more of that light which discovers such increasing glory in my God and Saviour ! let me feel the powerful influence of thy power in purifying me ; sprinkle * clean water upon me, and wash me from all self-sufficiency, from all vain glory ; clothe me with humility, that I may be always coming to Christ, that good which thou hast discovered to me, that I may be † doing justly, loving mercy, and be walking humbly with my God ; warm my soul with a sense of divine love, in an assured, confirmed hope of everlasting glory, in and through Christ Jesus ; shed abroad the love of God in my heart, that the graces which

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25. † Mic. vi. 3.

thou hast implanted may be watered thereby, and may be flourishing, that I may be more humble, and Christ may be more exalted within;—even so, gracious Lord, let it seem good unto thee to deal mercifully with thy servant.

EXODUS XXVIII. 36.

23

Holiness to the Lord.

WHERE there is an internal principle there will be an external evidence; yet there may be the external mark where there is no inward principle. The applause of man, and the exaltation of self, induce to the practice of morality, without any view to the glory of God, or the benefit of others. If I am*, by the grace of God, what I am—a renewed creature? must not all my actions take their rise in the inward principle? if not, have I not been deceiving myself and others for sixteen years nearly? But does the introduction of this holy principle expel the old corrupt nature, the old man? No; it remains, though it hath received its death blow; it dies struggling; and often revives so far as to bring very great disquietude into the mind, by robbing conscience of peace. I feel, by the ex-

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

perience of every day, that I can no more stand against temptation in my own strength, than I can stop the flowing of the tide. I think, now surely I see my folly, and feel my guilt, and shall stand out against the next attack: soon I am convinced I am weakness itself; I feel sin stirring within me, and temptation assailing me, so that, if the Lord did not hedge up my way, I should fall, I should perish. I have learnt by this last working of sin in me, that I should not be casting a stone at another, when there is so much rubbish in my own house; that I should not be so observing the mote in my neighbour's eye, when there is such a great beam in my own eye. I learn the need of hourly self-examination, constant prayer and watchfulness, and continued looking to and leaning upon Christ.

PSALM CXI. 9.

He hath sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever.

WHAT is man that God should be thus mindful of him! what am I, that I should be brought out of darkness into marvellous light! The Lord is merciful to whom he pleaseth; and pardons the rebels that have no claim on his mercy. Christ undertook the cause of man from

all eternity; and the Father gave him a people to redeem from sin and misery: to them he sends his redemption by his word, and applies and seals it by the Spirit; their ears are open to hear the word of the living God; their eyes are open to see beauty, excellency, and all-suitableness in Christ Jesus; they feel, under the quickening power of the everlasting Spirit, their guilt, and their want of Christ, and their hearts are opened to receive Christ; sick of sin, and weary of the burden of their guilt, they make application to Christ, the physician of souls, and from him they receive health and a cure; they hear the voice of the Son of God, and live; faith is wrought in them by the Spirit, by the word of God the appointed mean, and they receive the earnest from God of that glorious inheritance which is incorruptible:—In * whom (Christ Jesus) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. How sure is their mercy! it depends upon the everlasting love of God, and his faithfulness, who is not a man † that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent: it is more durable than the sun and moon, and all creation in its present state, for it is everlasting mercy—his mercy endureth for ever; and they who par-

* Eph. i. 13.

† Num. xxiii. 19.

take of it in time, by the effectual vocation of the Holy Spirit, will undoubtedly rejoice in it for ever and ever. Who are the subjects of it? Sinners, vile, wretched, helpless, and in themselves hopeless. Such are invited, exhorted, instructed to come unto Christ for salvation; and such sensible sinners are inclined to come, because they are convinced they can obtain help no where else. To whom, say they, shall we go, but to him who hath the words of eternal life? The character of sinner is mine; the invitation is to me: I have sinned against thee, O Lord, and am not worthy to be called thy son; but rebellious as I am, I again throw myself upon thy mercy in Christ Jesus; I come unto thee under the warrant of the covenant which thou hast commanded for ever: "If* any man sin" *any man!* it includes me, even vile me! "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one, and he is the propitiation for our sins. This is indeed good news from a far country; this is redemption sent unto his people: may my soul always rejoice in it believing.

* 1 John ii. 2.

A tried stone.

THOUSANDS have found Christ to be this; and tens of thousands are shouting hallelujahs to him for having been this unto them. What is man naturally? Darkness, till God illuminate his understanding; and dead, till God enliven his soul. God brings the sinner, either by the terrors of the law, to embrace Christ, or, by the mildness of the gospel, opens his heart to receive Christ, and so draws him with bands* of love. But since all are sinners, and acknowledge it, why do not all come to Christ, who is declared to be the only Saviour of sinners? If† our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world, the prince of darkness, hath blinded their eyes, the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. The trash of this world, its glittering toys, eclipse this sun of righteousness; and counters are preferred to the sterling gold of God's love, grace, and favour. Ah, my soul, how long was it thus with thee! and yet mercy intervened, and rescued thee from the iron bondage of fashion, vanity, and every licentious amusement; rescued thee

* Hosea xi. 4.

† 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

from the jaws of the devouring lion ; rescued thee from the dominion of pride, self-importance, and self-sufficiency : but how often art thou assailed by these thine enemies ! how often distressed by them ! how often has sin, in its operation within, joining temptation without, for a time brought on deranged faculties, so that thou hast been acting like a madman against thine own interest. My * leanness ! my leanness ! Woe unto me ! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously ; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously ! Yet how oft hath grace intervened, and, when I have been writing bitter things against myself, brought me relief by fresh discoveries of Christ's fullness, and by leading me to the ever-flowing fountain. Thou art, indeed, Christ, a tried stone—elect, precious ; a tried friend that loveth at all times ; a firm everlasting Saviour : let thy Spirit incline me to look more to thee, that I may never be looking to my poor resolutions or performances, and so turning from thee ; never permit me to be cherishing a serpent in my bosom, which will sting me to death ; never suffer me to be weeping for Tammuz † ; but may I be always looking to thee, whom my sins have pierced, and be mourning as for an only son. Ah ! what reason have I to go mourning all my days, and to mourn that I grieve so little for my ingratitude,

* Isa. xxiv. 16.

† Ezek. viii. 14.

my insensibility. O Jesus Lord, I would glory in thee my tried Saviour; I would exalt thee before the people:—give me thy grace to do it both by preaching and living.

ISAIAH LVII. 2.

He shall enter into peace.

HAPPY believer, who is safely arrived at the haven of eternal rest, of uninterrupted peace! what contentions, tumults, and wars, didst thou meet with in the way! sometimes enjoying spiritual freedom in thy nearer approach to thy Beloved; at other times annoyed by thine enemies, and contending with them in great weakness—faint*, yet pursuing: but thou art out of the reach of all thine enemies, who, as to their existence in and with thee, are now no more! How chequered the life of a real Christian, now rejoicing upon the mount of love and communion with God, now mourning in the valley of humiliation; rejoicing at one time in the presence of his God, whose † love is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit given unto him, and now anon mourning the absence of his Beloved; yet alike in these trying situations beloved of his God, and precious in his sight as the redeemed of

* Judges viii. 4.

† Rom. v. 5.

the Lord ! O my * soul, why art thou cast down ? and why art thou so disquieted within me ? I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God ! hope thou in God. How beautifully David argues here ! and how does he encourage his poor downcast soul to trust in the Lord, from a conviction that he was his faithful unchangeable God ! Tempest-tossed, and afflicted with a sense of my great unworthiness, but not despairing of my God's mercy, do thou, O my soul, put thy trust in God, hope in him ; thy Saviour is the Prince of Peace ; and thou oughtest to recollect he will not permit thee to be more exercised than shall be for his glory and thy benefit. Do the streams run high, and the billows dash against thee ? he hath said, the floods shall not overwhelm thee. Cast thyself then upon that God who careth for thee ; soon he will bring thee, under a prosperous gale, into the haven of eternal safety. Consider the number, who, after passing through much tribulation with faith and patience, are now ascribing glory to God, in the highest strains, for bringing them into his everlasting presence : their song is that of sinners saved by grace ; their work, to be ascribing the glory of salvation to their Redeemer God. Dost thou not join with them here, whilst thou art on earth, singing—Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord,

* Psalm xlii. 21.

† Rev. xiv. 13.

but unto thy name be all the praise? O for a deeper sense of divine love! a deeper sense of the obligation I am under to my God! for that peace which is in and by Christ Jesus! and rejoice, O my soul, that the shadows of the evening are stretching out, that the time of thy release is advancing, that soon thou shalt enter into everlasting peace!—Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.

PSALM CXIX. 113.

I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love.

HOW often do vain thoughts arise in my mind, and get possession, drawing off my attention from matters of the utmost importance! yet, I can truly say, I hate vain thoughts; they disturb my peace, and check the growth of the good seed. At some seasons I think I do find they have a salutary tendency; they drive me to self-examination, and to prayer for deliverance from them, and for greater inward conformity to Christ; and also cause me to look forward to that time when vain thoughts shall no more have an existence in me. Lord, grant that I may love thy law more, and that my meditation may be of it by day and by night, when I lie down, and when

I rise up again, in the day of prosperity, and in the seasons of adversity. How ought I, like David, to love thy law, thy word? and that for the discoveries it makes of the plan of salvation, formed from everlasting in thine eternal mind, and, in the fullness of the time appointed, executed by Christ Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; revealed in the word of thy truth by the Spirit Jehovah; and, I trust, revealed in me and to me by the same Spirit. Lord, what am I, that thy distinguishing mercy should save such a vile polluted creature, deserving nothing from thee but thine everlasting indignation? write gratitude on my heart, that I may be continually bringing my sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving unto thee, through Christ Jesus, my mediator and advocate with thee. Thy law, or word, reveals him to be the only way of access unto God: instruct me more fully by thy word; fix in me a deeper conviction that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; open mine eyes, to behold more clearly the wonderful things of thy law; and make me, under divine teaching, a sound experienced scholar in all the doctrines of thy gospel: when vain thoughts arise, and would dispute thy sovereignty, let thy law be my delight; when unbelieving thoughts arise, enable me, by faith in Christ Jesus, to take the comfort of the promises in thy word; when Satan is bringing my great weakness as an argument against my

being in the covenant, let me find thy word rejoicing my soul, that when I am weak then I am strong: sanctify my memory for the retention of thy truth; give me all in Christ, whereby I may be more alive to thee, and more active in thy service. In the time of alarm, and now that the clouds gather increasing blackness, let me be living under a conviction that Zion's God reigneth, that the Lord Jehovah is my salvation, that all my confidence may be in the Lord. Thou*, O Lord, art great in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem—thou that makest the outgoings of the evening and morning to praise thee.

I TIMOTHY V. 13.

Wandering about.

MAN on this earth is constantly wandering about from one place to another. Here nothing is fixed, nothing is certain. It must be thus from the nature of all things around us, and from our own nature too: changeable dispositions must have change of situation, and of circumstances to satisfy them; and how short-lived the satisfaction they yield! There is, however, one unchanging good, which, possessed, gives

* Psalm lxy. 1 & 2.

durable satisfaction ; because, when given, it is
 given for ever : Christ is this good, and God is
 the giver ; that God with whom there is no va-
 riableness * nor shadow of turning. While all
 things else perish in the using, let me be seeking
 for enjoyment in the knowledge of Christ Jesus,
 and him crucified ; because here only can I find
 what will satisfy me a poor, indigent, helpless
 creature. Christ is the good ; essentially so as he
 is God ; beneficially so as he is God and man,
 one Christ, the Saviour of all that believe in him.
 Have I found him ? here let me fix ; and never
 may my heart be wandering after other lovers,
 since all others must fail in the enjoyment ? Is
 Christ mine ? I may rejoice ; because he goes
 with me wheresoever I go, and dwells with me
 wheresoever I dwell. I may move from one ha-
 bitation to another, he moves with me, his watch-
 ful eye is ever upon me, his power is constantly
 engaged in preserving me, and his grace is suf-
 ficient for me : lest any hurt his vineyard, he
 watches over it night † and day. What a Sa-
 viour then is Christ ! O my soul, rejoice in him
 who ‡ joys over thee with singing ; who rests in
 his love, and whose everlasting arms of mercy
 are always underneath thee ; who careth for thee,
 and by his gentle corrections is giving proof
 thereof. I have been this day upon a bed of sick-

* James i. 17.

† Isa. xxvii. 3.

‡ Zeph. iii. 17.

ness and pain; and yet I have found my Saviour there, and faithful to his own gracious promise; he has removed my pain, and brought me to this new habitation in safety: I will praise him for his every mercy, and pray to him to keep me close in his bleeding side, leaning upon him, the beloved of my soul. Visit me with thy salvation, O Lord, and give me thy Spirit, reigning and ruling in and over me, that I may live all the days thou hast allotted me in this house in thy fear, and to thy glory. O that every heart of this family may be a Bethel! and every mind fixed upon Christ the God of salvation! Bless me with a fixed love of thee, O Jesus, and confirmed hope of eternal glory with thee: may my mind's eye be always fixed upon thee, and my heart devoted to thee, that I may never be wandering after other lovers.

ISAIAH XXIV. 7.

The merry-hearted do sigh.

WHY? Because deprived of that which occasioned their mirth. The vital principle implanted in a sinner's soul must be constantly supplied; and the word of God is like oil to the lamp, supplying what administers to the flame, and so causes light. What is this world to the renewed soul? Both an enemy and a friend: an

enemy to damp the flame, and weaken the operation of love ; and a friend to quicken the sense of the want and worth of Christ, and drive the soul to seek for revival in her beloved. The world is the thief of time, and my soul's plunderer, as it robs me of that which ought to be devoted to my Saviour, and thereby diminishes the flourishing peace of my conscience, and comforts of my soul. Who would trust a thief and a murderer, that is continually holding out allurements ? Yet I am in the world : if that were all I might rejoice ; but I find the world in me, taking possession of my thoughts, working upon my affections. Well then may I sigh, to think that any thing should only for a moment draw my thoughts, or detach my affections from my Lord. Have I not reason hence to doubt the sincerity of my profession and affection. Lord, thou knowest I desire to love and serve thee better, the longer I am spared in time, O that I did but sigh more for my spiritual unchastity, and for thy comfortable presence, withdrawn from me on that account ! Rejoice * the soul of thy servant, for in thee do I put my trust ; give me more of the wine of thy gracious promises, and of communion with thee, that I may find my spirit refreshed, and my soul comforted. Here I am, a stranger in a strange place :—never let me find peace but in thee, nor

* Psalm lxxxvi. 4.

myself at home but with thee, that my longing soul may be rejoicing in thy salvation. Dost thou, O Saviour Christ, say, Ask what thou wilt, and I will give it thee? I then ask for all thou canst give—thyself, that art all in all, that I may enjoy more holy communion and fellowship with thee, and, under the teaching of thy Spirit, may be increasing in the knowledge of thee: give me thy word, a feast* of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined, that, from a sense of its divine power, I may be enabled to preach it feelingly to the congregation; to speak of thy love, and of the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners coming to thee: do thou apply thy word for the joy of the mourners; and seeing thy work prosper, enable me to rejoice with them that do rejoice.

HEBREWS XII. 14.

—*Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

HOW often does he, who transforms himself into an angel† of light, work upon the minds of babes in Christ, by bringing this text to distress and terrify them. Young men in Christ are not exempt from his suggestions; nor are the aged always upon their guard against his

* Isa. xxv. 6. † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

wiles. Alas ! how apt are we, under such assaults, to think nothing is going on well ; and that, because we do not find so much holiness in ourselves as the devil would persuade us is necessary for God's acceptance of us in Christ ; as if our obedience were to be put into the scale with Christ, to make it preponderate against the guilt of our sins ! Well might the Apostle say, We* are not ignorant of his devices :—this is a strong one, and a tried one on his part, by which he hath and does succeed to the distressing many a young soldier of Jesus Christ, yea, and to the sometimes surprizing an old veteran : he delights in stirring up our pride, and to make us think ourselves to be something when we are nothing ; how oft does he hereby blind our eyes against the fullness and the sufficiency of the Redeemer. Surely whatever tends to feed pride must be dangerous, and, if indulged, fatal too :—but here God is pleased to come, and, by fresh light communicated, to make discoveries of this deceiver's treacherous intentions ; and, by convincing me more of my own weakness and helplessness, to make me more sensible of my absolute need of Christ, and his all-sufficient righteousness ; so that, under the leadings of the Spirit, I am again brought as a poor sinner, in myself bankrupt, to Christ, for that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord : and

* 2 Cor. ii. 11.

when, by the operation of the same Spirit, I am made truly sensible of the obligations I am under to Christ for his justifying obedience, I feel grieved that I cannot be always perfecting * holiness in the fear of the Lord. The desire to be found walking in the ways of my God is good, as it is by the Holy Spirit wrought in me; and a sense of my deficiencies in the obedience I owe for mercies received, inclines me to rely more on Christ, and to depend more wholly upon him. Lord, increase this desire, that, under increasing convictions of my need of Christ, I may, depending upon him, have † no confidence in the flesh; I may be more studious to learn thy will, and to produce the fruit of righteousness. I have continual reason to lament my barrenness and unfruitfulness, and to admire the abounding grace of my God in permitting such a cumberer of the ground to continue, yea, in condescending to use such a poor vessel for his own service. O Holy Spirit, make me more like my Saviour, more delighting in doing my heavenly Father's will, more meek, more holy, more humble! Quicken me, that I may feel myself alive in the service of my God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
With all thy quick'ning pow'rs!
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours!

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

† Phil. iii.

MATTHEW XI. 6.

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

AM I thus blessed, so that I am not offended in Christ? How is it that I, a proud, selfish, rebellious sinner, am brought to receive Christ, and to be accepted through him? By the grace of God, grace humbled that proud heart, which once cried, If I cannot save myself, Christ, I am sure, cannot save me. Here was the very pride of the devil—who conquered it? God, by his power, making me willing to receive salvation by grace, to be saved wholly by Christ, to be justified by his righteousness, washed in the fountain of his blood. I will praise the Lord for his mercies, and speak of his loving-kindness to the children of men. But, alas! how proud and rebellious am I still! how sinful and polluted! I come this hour, O Lord, again to thee, with the publican's prayer, and I think with some similar feelings, and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. Never let me be offended; but give me an understanding heart, an humbled soul, a judgment rightly informed, and a will wholly in subjection to thy will, with spiritualized affections. Once I was offended with the poverty of those who embrace the gospel; but now I rejoice that the poor are evangelized. I was too haughty to think the unlearned of men were "the taught of God," because this stained

the pride of man, and the ideal dignity of human nature ; hence I rejected the doctrines, and denied the authority of the God of salvation ; but now I admire the sovereignty of God in saving whom he will, and trust I am taught and influenced by that Spirit whose agency on the human mind I once denied. Am I not the blessed of the Lord, who hath enabled me to glory in the cross of Christ ?

PSALM CIII. 1.

Bless the Lord, O my soul !

I AM continually called upon to engage in this work by the continued mercies I am receiving from my God. Protected on my way, I am arrived here in safety ; supplies are given me for the support of animal life ; and more, yea much more than this—the Lord my Redeemer is visiting me with his salvation, and thereby calling upon me to praise and glorify him. Where had I now been but for the gracious mercy of my God ? He * brought me out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Through his mercy I am delivered from the pit of corruption ; by his grace I am fixed on Christ Jesus ; and by his Spirit I am led into the way

* Psalm xl. 2.

of truth. Do not such mercies call for gratitude? I will praise the Lord, and call upon the name of my God. O Lord, give me more grace, more wisdom from above, and more of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, that I may be acknowledging thee in all my ways; revive thy work more in my soul, that I may be always living to thee. I bless thee, O Lord, for Christ Jesus, and for that fullness there is in him for me a sinner, wholly, and, if possible, more than wholly undeserving thy mercy: thou mightest justly cast me off for my sins of omission and of commission; but thou art faithful and unchangeable:—Many* waters cannot quench divine love. The filth of my sins might so stick to me as to keep me from entering into that place where no unclean thing can come; but thou hast said, Wash† and be clean;—yea, thou hast said, I will‡ sprinkle clean water upon you, and will cleanse you from all your filthiness. O Lord§, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Satan tempts me with strong temptations: why is it I do not always comply, but because thou art pleased to make a way for my escape, that I may be able to bear it? My corruptions stir within me, and cry, Give, give! it is wholly of thy grace that I am enabled

* Cantic. viii. 7.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

‡ 2 Kings v. 13.

§ Psalm li. 7.

at any time to resist them. The world frowns ;— through thy grace I can bear it : the world smiles, and I feel the danger of my situation, and cry to the Lord, who gives me grace equal to my day. Surely then I ought, at all times, and in all exigencies, to rely upon God, even my God and Saviour, for grace, strength, and conquest ; and not less ought I to be continually summoning my soul, and all that is within me, to bless and praise God for what he hath done for me, as well as for what he is doing, and for what he stands engaged to do : He is faithful and true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. To him will I look for grace to help me in every time of need ; for strength to resist the renewed attacks of mine enemies ; and for the fulfilment of his promise to lift up a standard when the enemy comes in like a flood ; I will thank him for all that is past, and, through his own grace, will trust him for all that is to come. Let me ever remember the loving-kindness of the Lord ; let me ever remember his gracious declaration concerning those who, from a sense of past mercies, are putting their trust in him :—They * that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, and abideth for ever ; and let me bless the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises to our God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.

* Psalm cxxv. 1.

GENESIS XXXIX. 20.

The Lord was with Joseph.

THE Lord's people are his delight; he is ever with them wheresoever they are. In the dungeon in Egypt he was with Joseph, giving him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison; and was he not also afterward with Peter, when he sent his angel, and delivered him from prison? Herod thought to put Peter to death; but the Lord was with Peter. Is* the Lord's hand shortened, that he cannot save? or his ear heavy, that he cannot hear? is God a changeable Being, that he should not at all times regard his people? No; he is the same gracious God and loving Father; the same compassionate and tender Saviour; the same merciful and comforting Spirit. Joseph suffered for his plainness, simplicity, and sincerity; for his strong attachment to his Father's God; for his fidelity to his Maker; and the Lord was with Joseph. Alas! what am I? A worm, yea, a rebel against my God: when my foes approach me, how often do I parley with them, and give them the advantage over me! how frequently am I entangled with wicked thoughts, and going on giving them an existence yet stronger within me, before I am aware that

* Isa. lix. 1.

I am in the enemies company ! I awake, I attempt to shake myself ; but soon find I have been strengthening the hands of my enemy, and have been weakening myself. What must I do ? I will acknowledge my transgression ; and I will confess my sin. Lord, deliver me from the power, malice, and treachery of all mine enemies ! Oh, when will that happy time arrive, when I shall be convinced, by sweet experience, that they have no longer any existence within me ! that my whole soul is taken up with thee ! Oh, that it were so now ! that, by the aboundings of thy grace, and by the operations of thy Spirit, I was, Joseph-like, heartily alive to my God, and always meeting temptation with, How * can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ! Keep me as the apple of the eye ; hide me under the shadow of thy wings ; purify me by the blood of sprinkling, which purgeth the conscience from dead works : give me, O my God, the faith of Abraham, the chastity of Joseph, that my heart may never be going after idols ; but that in thought, word, and deed, I may be living to thy glory. Let me consider, that the hearts of all men are under thy power, that thou turnest them whithersoever it pleaseth thee, and that thy will shall take place, mauer all opposition from men and devils. Thou reignest over all the kingdoms of the earth.

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

Surely then I ought never to be driven, by the fear of man, to forget thee, to renounce my allegiance to thee, to dishonour thee. Grant that, under thy restraining grace, I may be kept from yielding to sinful solicitations, from doubting thy faithfulness ; but may, in the exercise of faith, be committing the keeping of my soul unto thee, as unto a faithful creator : in every season of adversity let me find that Joseph's God is with me, my counsellor, my guide, my comfort : in life let me find thou art with me, to guide me into, and keep me in all truth ; in sickness my health ; in prosperity my hope ; in death my all : let me, like Joseph, be, in all circumstances, a chaste worshipper of my God ; and find, wheresoever I am, my God is with me.

ACTS XVII. 31.

He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

IT is certain that I must die ; and it is as certain that I must appear before Christ the judge. All the secrets of my heart will then be disclosed ; the hidden things of darkness brought to light ; and sentence will be passed upon all the human

race. Who can stand the trial of that day, seeing
 all have sinned, and come short of the glory of
 God? and how can I appear before Christ the
 judge? How oft have I trampled on his laws,
 disputed his authority, and contended with him!
 yet a brand pluckt out of the burning when I was
 destroying myself! Lord, how great is thy mercy!
 and how full of compassion art thou to a poor
 wretch, who, wallowing in his blood, merited no-
 thing from thee but thine everlasting indignation!
 glory be to thee for what thou hast done for me,
 even for me!—for the light and life thou hast
 vouchsafed me! How long was I walking in
 darkness, not knowing whither I was going, till
 mercy intervened, convinced me of the error of
 my ways, and grace was displayed in the gift of
 Jesus Christ, and his salvation! Yet, Lord, how
 often am I assaulted by Satan, who is from time
 to time trying to work upon my treacherous
 heart, and to bring me to doubt thy mercy and
 thy truth, as if it were a thing impossible for thee
 to raise the dead. The returning Spring convinces
 me what thou canst do; the resurrection of thy
 Son Jesus Christ, my Saviour, confirms me in the
 doctrine; and what I read in thy word I believe.
 I believe my soul is immortal, because I find no-
 thing less than thee, the infinite Good, will satisfy
 it: its desires after thee are increasing, and can
 only be satisfied by the everlasting enjoyment of
 thee. My body, now gross matter, flesh and blood,

shall be raised a glorious body, to be with the soul ever with my Saviour God. Can I doubt it? Is it more difficult for thee to gather thy work together, however divided, than it was for thee to form this body out of nothing by thy all-creative power? Let me then never, for one moment, indulge a doubt of what thou hast asserted; but, under the influences of the Spirit Jehovah, let me be glorifying thee with my soul and body, which are thine—thine by right of creation; thine by right of redemption. Am I begotten * again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? let me be always serving God with reverence and godly fear; living under a conviction that my whole dependance is on God, for life, and breath, and all things: and in a firm persuasion that this mortal shall put on immortality, may the Lord, the Spirit, direct † my heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. I would daily be realizing the solemnities of that day, when this body, raised from the dead, shall, with the soul, stand both approved in Christ my righteousness and my atonement, and be advanced to everlasting glory;—

When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies;
E'en then shall this be all my plea,—
Jesus hath liv'd, and died for me.

* 1 Pet. i. 3.

† 2 Thes. iii. 5.

PROVERBS XII. 25.

*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it sloop; but
a good word maketh it glad.*

THE heart of man is from time to time creating its own heaviness: it is justly described as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. The depth of iniquity in the human heart who can fathom? what high thoughts of self! what low thoughts of God! what desires after the perishing things of this world! how little concerned for God's glory, and the things of eternal duration! When I recollect the wanderings of my heart, the coldness of my love, and the insensibility I lie under, while receiving gracious mercy from the Lord, I feel heaviness, and find the necessity of divine revelation. From the relief afforded me by the word of God rejoicing my heart, I have an inward testimony of the divine original of that word, and have growing cause to set my seal to it. When worldly cares oppress, I am directed to seek * the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and assured by my heavenly Father, that whatever is needful shall be given unto me. When soul troubles increase, I find my God speaking to me with the affection of a parent:—Call † upon me in the day of

* Matt. vi. 33.

† Psalm l. 15.

trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. When sickness pervades this sinful body, and Satan whispers, Where is your God now? my God says, My * son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; and if ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. When losses abound, and crosses arise from every quarter; when clouds obscure the bright shining of the glorious sun of righteousness, and an enemy cries, Your God hath forsaken you; my God addresses me with—Can † a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. But unbelief asks, How may I know this for a certainty? The Lord declares for thy conviction: Behold! I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. After all this, my heart is at times full of heaviness; I am ungrateful, proud, self-sufficient, insensible of my mercies, which are so continually renewed unto me by a gracious God. O that I could be mourning my sins more, and be continually looking unto Jesus, that through divine grace, in its powerful operation, I might, from viewing him crucified for me a sinner, find my

* Heb. xii. 5, 6.

† Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

hard heart softened, my proud heart humbled, my self-sufficient heart renouncing self wholly, and my insensible heart under lively impressions of the Lord's mercies to me a sinner, and my tongue speaking the praises of the Lord! Lord, give me increasing faith in thee, and increasing love of thee, that I may at all times be sensible of thy goodness and grace in Jesus Christ to me a sinner; keep me waiting in the use of the means of grace; and refresh my soul with the consolations of thy Spirit. Do thou, in mercy to my soul, make thy word effectual for the removing heaviness from my heart, and let me find it my comfort in this place of my pilgrimage. Glorify thyself, O God, in bringing me safely through all my troubles to thine everlasting kingdom of glory!

NUMBERS VII. 2.

The princes of Israël, heads of the house of their fathers, offered.

WHAT condescension in God to accept any offering from man! What is man's natural character? He* drinketh iniquity like water; is continually trespassing against the Most High; and is carnal, sensual, and devilish: and can such an one presume to draw nigh unto

* Job xv. 16.

God? In himself there is no-acceptation for him ; but in Christ even such may be justified, and sanctified, and accepted of God ; and then he may bring his offering unto the Lord : he must first come to Christ for salvation ; and then to God, through Christ, with his offering of praise and prayer :—No * man, says Christ, can come unto the Father but by me : and Christ is † able, and does save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Gracious news this from a far country, like cold water to a thirsty soul. The princes of Israel offered. Every disciple of Christ, being born of the Spirit, is such an one—an Israelite, a prince ; honoured of the Lord he is honourable indeed ; chosen in Christ Jesus from among the children of men, who are lying in wickedness, in the everlasting purpose of the Father called and sanctified by the Spirit Jehovah, he is made a prince and an Israelite indeed ; a true child of Abraham, living in faith on Christ, and bringing his offering of praise unto the Lord. Lord, I would at all times approach thee with that offering who is Christ the Lord, and plead with thee his atonement for my pardon, his righteousness for my justification, and his word and promise for the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, that under his powerful operation I may be continually bringing thee the offering which thou dost require, even

* John. xiv. 6.

† Heb. vii. 25.

that of a broken* and contrite heart, which thou wilt not despise; yea, the sacrifice of my soul and body: let the faculties of the one, and the members of the other, be always holy to the Lord; let me consider them as devoted to thee, and thine, by redemption from the power of the enemy, that I may be serving thee continually. What great reasons are there that I should be doing this! how long didst thou bear with me in my sins and folly, when thy justice would have been glorified in my eternal damnation! but thou delightest in mercy, and spared me, that I might partake of thy grace in the gift of that salvation which is by Jesus Christ:—And what† is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am!

- The Israelites were brought into Canaan; I am brought into the liberty of the gospel. Shall I not then praise the Lord, who hath liberated me from the bondage of sin, Satan, and my own corruptions? I will magnify thee, O Lord, and praise thy name for ever! praise thee for spiritual light and life, and pray to thee for more of both; and do thou receive me in Christ Jesus the Lord. As a prince, may I, by power derived graciously from thee, rule my inclinations, desires, and passions, in subjection to the law of love in Christ Jesus; and, as a priest, may I be continually bringing my thank-offering to the Lord my God, offering it up

* Psalm li. 17.

† 2 Sam. ix. 8.

on that altar thou hast given me a right to, that it may be accepted of thee for Christ's sake:—
We * have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

PSALM XXXVII. 31.

The law of his God is in his heart.

WHAT an evidence is this of the person's admission into the covenant of grace, of his being quickened by God the Spirit, and of his being an heir of everlasting glory? How came God's law in the heart? This † is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. Such is the grace of God in Christ Jesus to sinners of mankind, by which they become sensible they are partakers of divine mercy, and are alive unto God. Where the law of God is in the heart, there the love of God is in the soul: these are closely connected; they are inseparable. The knowledge of God, as a covenant God in his Son Christ Jesus, draws the affections of the soul to him; the sense of sin pardoned rejoices the heart, and excites to praise God. But how may

* Heb. xiii. 10.

† Jer. xxxi. 33.

I know God has done this in me? Do I delight* in the law of God after the inner man? and is sin hateful, Christ precious—so precious, that I would sooner part with all than part with him? is he the desire of my soul? and am I acting for his glory? then I may hope God is my God:—feeling something of this, I may say, Other Lords have had dominion over me, but by thee, the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will I now make mention of thy name: enable me, at all times, by a life and conversation becoming thy gospel, to evidence thy law is in my heart; and that my mouth, speaking out of the abundance of my heart, may minister grace unto the hearers: let thy law be my meditation by day and by night. I am indeed a poor beggar: do thou, O Lord, relieve me! feed and clothe my soul with Christ, that I may glorify thee more!

ISAIAH LVII. 18.

I will lead him, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.

LOST and wandering from God, what a miserable creature is man! yet how insensible! ignorant of his state, like a madman who imagines himself to be a king, till, like the Prodigal, he

* Rom. vii. 22.

comes to himself, feels his situation, and is wretched. He now mourns his guilt, and supplicates mercy;—the Lord sees him, and is manifesting mercy to him; leads him in the right way; and restores comfort to him a sensible mourning sinner. Lord, I plead with thee thine own gracious word of promise: I am ignorant; teach me, lead me, and guide me into the path of peace, and into the path-way of holiness: thou hast made me to * possess the iniquities of my youth; mine iniquities are more in number than the hairs of my head; my sorrows are enlarged;—O bring thou me out of all my troubles! comfort my soul with the truths of thy word, and give me the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness! I find my need of thy guidance every moment; I feel the want of thy comforts to rejoice my heart; I find all other loves not only insufficient, but increasing sorrow. Blind, without divine illumination, I should ever have wandered from the Lord, like a lost sheep, if sovereign mercy had not intervened, and brought me back to the fold of Jesus Christ. Living in sorrow and vexation of spirit, from renewed disappointments, I had still been lying a wretched outcast, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, if thou hadst not had compassion on me, and bound up my wounds, and given peace to my

* Job xiii. 26.

conscience, by giving me faith in Jesus Christ. Now, Lord, I stand in momentary need of thy leading and comforts!—Lord, do thou lead me, and comfort me with thy consolations.

GENESIS III. 20.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

ADAM, fallen by transgression, no sooner heard of the Saviour, than he believed: the promise given he was enabled to mix faith with, and found the benefit in his soul. He called his wife's name Eve, not so much as the general mother of human nature, proceeding from them, but in consideration of the Saviour, who was to be born the seed of the woman, not of the man, in the fullness of time. I have, in my Bible, God's testimony that this Saviour has been born, has lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven; that he lived under the law to the law, fulfilling all righteousness; that he died a sacrifice for sin, rose again for my justification, ascended into heaven, taking possession of a kingdom of glory for his redeemed; and that he dispenses repentance and forgiveness of sins. Here then I see grace abounding where sin abounded; here I see Mercy and Truth met together. How will Adam's faith

in a promised Saviour condemn me, if I receive not the testimony God hath given me of his Son Jesus Christ ! But my sins are different from Adam's ; they are great, have been repeated again and again, and that too against the light of reason, of revelation—against convictions, resolutions, and experienced mercies ! Yes, but Christ died for sinners ; Christ compassionated a fallen Peter ; and Christ says, Turn* ye, backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Turn† thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned ; help mine unbelief ; and enable me to consider what unspeakable great glory arises to God from the seed of the woman having bruised the serpent's head, and redeeming sinners from the curse of the law, that glorying in Christ, I may, in returning to him, find rest.

HEBREWS XI. 32.

What shall I more say ?

WHAT more can I say, than that grace abounds to the chief of sinners, through Jesus Christ, the Saviour ? Is it a mystery the angels desire to look into ? Man, a partaker of this grace cannot be silent. Grace does abound to sinners, to vile sinners, or I had been left to perish

* Jer. iii. 22.

† Jer. xxxi. 18.

in my sins, to lie in darkness, not knowing whither I was going. Why did God vouchsafe his grace to persecuting Saul, and save him by Christ Jesus? For the encouragement of sinners like him to come to Christ for the salvation of their souls, that seeing the aboundings of God's grace to such a proud rejecting persecuting Pharisee, they might not sink into despair, but might take encouragement to come to God for mercy. What says Paul of God's dealings with him? Hear him speak, and, ascribing glory to God, call upon you and me, fellow sinner, to open our hearts, and receive the same Saviour:—The * grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus:—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. This character of the chief of sinners is mine; and did Christ come to save such? O the aboundings of God's grace, where sin had so abounded to the dishonouring God! The Apostle adds: Howbeit † for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern or encouragement to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Has the same gracious God saved the writer, the very chiefest of sinners? then Reader thou mayest not despair;

* 1 Tim. i. 14.

† Ibid, 16.

but take encouragement, and come to him who is able to save thee to the uttermost. O the mercy of God, in looking on me in compassion, in mercifully enlightening my mind, quickening my soul, humbling my pride, subjugating my will, changing my desires, and inflaming my heart with love of him.

ECCLESIASTES III. 2.

A time to be born, and a time to die.

HOW short the time of life ! how certain the hour of death ! Am I born into this world ? it is certain I must soon, very soon, die out of it. How necessary to be redeeming time, and to be using it in the acquiring those riches and that wisdom which are eternal ! Who is the wise man ? The man that secures his eternal interests, who considers eternity, and is preparing in time for it. Am I thus wise ? or am I spending time in the service of mine enemies ? What an account of mispent days and years appears upon the review against me ! and how near is death ! This is the shortest day in the year ; it may be the last of time, and the first in eternity to me—Awful thought ! Am I prepared for death—for judgment ? how shall I, a prodigal of time and talents, appear before God ? Lord, what art thou ? Gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and with thee is plen-

teous redemption: hence encouraged, I come again to thee, and cast myself, a poor guilty sinner, upon thy mercies in Christ Jesus, imploring thy pardon for all my mispent time:—Be * merciful unto me, O God! according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences; wash me thoroughly from all my sins; and so enrich my soul with thy grace, that I may be careful to redeem time, since so small a portion of it remains to me. Death, what art thou? A sentence passed upon me; and there is no discharge:—It † is appointed unto man, unto me, once to die; and after that the judgment. Death, what art thou? A privilege to some;—to whom? To the righteous in Christ, to his redeemed: a privilege I trust to me, even to me, who, under divine teaching and operation, am blessed with the circumcision of the heart, am renouncing all confidence in the flesh, worshipping God in spirit, and at times rejoicing in Christ Jesus: then, through Christ, I may triumph over death, knowing that death shall not keep me under his dominion; knowing that death is the appointed way of admission into a kingdom of glory.

* Psalm li. 3, 2.

† Heb. ix. 27.

OBADIAH 17.

Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.

WHAT thousands have found this scripture verified in their experience, to their everlasting consolation ! The place where God dwelleth, between the cherubims, dispensing gracious salvation : here the sinner should be looking to the mercy-seat, viewing a reconciled God in Christ looking down upon the children of men, and dispensing mercy. No deliverance from the curse of the law, but by him who is the * power of God, and the wisdom of God : no deliverance from the ruling power of Satan, and the reigning power of sin, but by the seed of the woman, who bruised the serpent's head ; and deliverance for all, who, sensible of their captivity, groaning in anguish of spirit for deliverance, make application to Christ the deliverer :—There † shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob : not only a deliverance from the guilt of sin, but from the allowed fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, the allowed practice of sin. But to whom is Christ a deliverer ? Hear the Lord speak, ye sin-sick souls, who are panting for deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin, who are weary and heavy laden :—

* 1 Cor. i. 24.

† Rom. xi. 26.

The* Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. It is God's work, and God's promise; God's work to turn sinners from their transgressions, to convince them, to humble them, to bring them to seek for deliverance; and it is his promise, that when they are turning from transgression, he will give Jesus unto them by the Spirit's revelation of him in their hearts. How inexcusable to neglect this salvation! how good is God to incline me to come to him for it!—and come again and again I must to Christ my deliverer; the corrupt principle is within, though restraint has been laid upon it through divine grace; a little spark sets all on fire; but great grace humbles, and rich grace pardons, through the divine power of cleansing, which the blood of Christ possesses. Make haste, O Lord, to deliver me!

AMOS IX. 14.

They also shall make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

HOW many memorials are there of the once happy state of man! yea, and of the fall of man! Where can I go? and on what can I look that does not speak powerfully, that man, once

* Isa. lix. 20.

the highly favoured creature of God, is now a rebel, a sinner? What wonderful transactions, having taken place in gardens, how instructive are they! yea, how humbling, mortifying, and comforting! Man made by God, and placed in a garden planted by God, abounding with all the delights of nature, and man holding intercourse with God in this paradise, was this once the happy state of man? O ingrate! to fly in the face of so much love. Adam, where and what art thou? A poor miserable wretch, lying under disappointment. What am I? Sinful, and miserable:—and why? Because, wandering from God, I have eaten the forbidden fruit of sin, and found disappointment, vexation, and guilt. Does God say, Sinner, where art thou? what hast thou done? Guilt makes me silent: yet, O my soul, turn to Gethsemane, and see in that garden the second Adam agonizing, previous to his drinking that cup made so bitter by thy sin; see redemption-work going forward in a garden; and art thou not filled with wonder, lost in admiration? View your Creator prostrate in the garden, and hear him cry, Father*, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet hear his love prevailing over the agony of his soul: The † cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? not my will, as struggling with the feelings of human

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

† John xviii. 11.

nature, but thine be done. O beautiful rose of Sharon! O sweet lily of the valley! O precious tree, bearing the fruit of salvation for the children of men, and enriching their souls with thy delights! Melt down, O my soul, at the recollection of thy Redeemer's sufferings; and while thou mournest the sad consequences of transgression in the garden of Eden, look unto Christ the repairer of the breach; rejoice that Christ conflicted with thine adversary, and overcame him. In thy garden meditate on man's fall and recovery. Lord, fill my soul with thy comforts!

AMOS IX. 15.

And they shall no more be pulled up out of this land, which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

HAPPY the people who have the Lord for their God! Rejoice, ye redeemed of Christ; yours is everlasting redemption; your kingdom is fortified by salvation; Christ is the king thereof,—the * God of the whole earth shall he be called. The land of your nativity was a barren land, full of blood and violence; a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; the land into which ye are brought, and of which ye are now the inhabitants,

* Isa. liv. 5.

Having an unalienable right unto, is a land of liberty, and light, and love; a land truly flowing with milk and honey; a land inviting hungry and thirsty sinners to come into it and be happy. The Lord of this land issues his royal proclamation:—
 Ho*! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price! Have I heard this invitation? am I come in under this proclamation? it is as free and full as sovereign grace can make it; free to such vile sinners as I am; full, too, of all the pardons I need. Drawn by sovereign grace, and won by constraining love, I have been made willing to quit the land of slavery, the land of inglorious living, and come to Christ for my soul's salvation, for the redemption of soul and body. How full the grant! how absolute the declaration of the safety of the inhabitants!—They shall no more be plucked up out of the land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God—*thy God*: Mind that, O soul! rejoice in divine protection; hear thy Redeemer addressing thee,—I have † given unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. It is then a land of everlasting life; they that live in it shall live for ever, and by and by be admitted into the pre-

* Isa. lv. 1.

† John x. 28.

sence of their sovereign, to be always with him. Blessed, O Jesus, be the Lord thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne to be King ; because thy God loved Israel ; to establish them for ever ; therefore made he thee King over them.

I TIMOTHY III. 16.

*Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness,
God manifest in the flesh.*

WELL might Paul say, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of God's love passes all understanding. I am ignorant of the mystery of sin, which caused, in the love of God, this mystery of Godliness—God in human nature ; not in its sinful state, but low and humble ; without sickness, because sickness is the consequence of sin ; but not without sorrow, for Christ was born to sorrow—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. I am ignorant how body and soul are one man : if I cannot account for that, which is less and more common, why should I be controversial, and dispute the two natures, divine and human, in one Christ ? God was offended by human nature ; and the suffering humanity of Christ Jesus fully satisfied divine justice for his redeemed. O Love divine, surpassing.

human conception ! the Ancient of Days an infant ! the Creator of the world born in a stable, and lying in a manger ! the judge suffering for the prisoner ! all is mystery ! yet the Holy Spirit hath sealed instruction on my mind : I see the necessity for this on the part of God, or no mercy for sinful man, no redemption from the curse of the law. But what do I see ? Glory in abasement ! love in death ! heaven and earth united ! Jacob's ladder ! angels admiring ! devils conquered ! man, sinful man, pardoned, justified, sanctified ! all the blessed consequence of Christ's advent into this world. Can I join in ascribing glory to God in the highest, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ? With humility I lift up my soul to God in praise for that light which has discovered this Saviour unto me, and for that grace which hath made him precious as the Redeemer of my soul and body : yet, alas, I mourn my ignorance, and blindness, and deadness, that I see and know so little, and am so insensible. Quicken me, O thou life-giving Spirit ! warm my soul with thy bright beams, thou glorious Sun of Righteousness, thou bright morning-star, thou only source of eternal consolation ! O my Creator Saviour, visit me with thy salvation ! rejoice the soul of thy servant !

PROVERBS XXVII. 17.

Iron sharpeneth iron, so the countenance of a man his friend.

I OFTEN asserted, I believed in the communion of saints ! and was ignorant of the meaning of that expression, and a stranger to the comfort arising from spiritual conversation. How full of contradiction is an unenlightened sinner ! professing to believe what in practice he is continually denying ; ridiculing the very truths which, in the house of God, he declares he believes. The recollection of this is painful ; and O that I felt it more ! that I might be more humbled before God for it, more self-abased in his sight, and be excited to praise him continually for that spiritual light and life he hath communicated to my understanding and soul. How edifying, how rejoicing the account of what God hath done by his grace in the renewed soul ! Come *, says David, and I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my soul ! The relations of soul-dealings are soul-comforts : two that are agreed in spiritual things walk comfortably in spiritual conversation ; they edify one another ; their appetites are more sharpened ; their desires more quickened ; and their souls more alive unto God :—yet how much more

* Psalm lxvi. 16.

animating is the countenance of my almighty friend! when Jesus smiles, when Jesus speaks, how is the heart affected! how does the soul rejoice! It* is the voice of my Beloved; he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills;—behold! he standeth behind our wall; he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. What condescension, what grace in God, thus to draw near to man, to draw near in love and mercy to a poor polluted worm! Come then, O my Saviour, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon me: Stay † me with flaggons; comfort me with apples;—indulge me with sweet fellowship with thee, my God and my Lord, and with communion with thy children, that my soul may rejoice in thee.

PSALM LX. 12.

Through God we shall do valiantly; for he shall tread down our enemies.

WHAT disorder hath sin introduced into this world! and what confusion prevails! Wars, and rumours of war; nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom! What feuds, discords, and animosities prevail! and what is my soul, my heart! what and where am I?

* Cantic. ii. 8.

† Ib. ii. 5.

why such discordant notes in my addressees to God? why such tumultuous thoughts interrupting the peace of my conscience? why such perplexities, and fears, and doubts? O my corrupt nature, my deceitful heart, my depraved imagination! and, Oh Satan, thou enemy to my soul's peace and joy, how are mine enemies rising up against me, and warring against my comforts! But shall I be cast down and despair, because they are continually fighting? shall I give up to them when the Lord is on my side? God forbid! and may God enable me to put my trust in him, and to keep looking unto Jesus. Will not that God, who, in the freeness of his mercy, and in the riches of his grace, hath wrought out salvation for me, and revealed it in me, afford me strength equal unto my day? I am weak; yet how often hath the Lord been my strength, so that I have been saying, when* I am weak, then am I strong; and to the glory of God's grace, and of his faithfulness, how often hath he, when the enemy came in like a flood, lifted up a standard against him. My strength is weakness! To thee do I look, O blessed Jesus, for renewed strength, for fresh conquest; yea, to thee do I look, for complete victory, for everlasting triumph; yea, to thee do I look, that here on earth I may in thee, by thee, and through thee, do valiantly; and that I may finally put my feet upon the necks of these kings, and triumph for

* 2 Cor. xii. 10.

ever in my faithful Redeemer. Through God we shall do valiantly, for he shall tread down our enemies.

PSALM XXV. 8.

Good is the Lord.

IN more instances than I can number, in more ways than I can tell: good in sparing me through another night, and bringing me to see the light of returning day. What mercies do I enjoy! habitation, clothes, limbs, reason, food, fire, attendants; and for these how small my gratitude! Yet greater mercies than these are given me—grace and peace in Christ Jesus, the God of my salvation; and yet how poor my returns of praise to the Lord! His goodness and mercy have prevented and followed me all the days of my life; through his goodness I feel sin my burden, and find encouragement to come to Christ for relief; through it I feel sin my sorrow, and am led to Christ for the garment of salvation, of joy; through it I feel my inability to do any thing that is good, and am brought to Christ, a poor helpless sinner, for grace and strength; through it I find this to be an enemy's country, that it is not my rest, and am inclined to seek after that rest which is in Christ Jesus; through it I would live free from sin in thought, word, and deed; and

I feel I carry a body of death within me whithersoever I go; and am constrained to look to Christ for final victory. Satan assaults, the world tempts, and the flesh pleads for gratification; and all through God's goodness, in the dispensation of his grace, drive me more to my refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ. Good is the Lord: may I acknowledge it, and entertain an abiding sense of it. Let a sweet sense of the divine complacency to my soul make me walk more humbly before thee, in all holiness unto obedience of the faith, and unto unfeigned love of the brethren: keep me from falling; and succour me in every time of need: feed my soul, and strengthen it with the bread of life; and, in thy goodness, enable me with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation.

ECCLESIASTES X. 18.

By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

MANY professors are wondering that they do not increase in knowledge and comfort; when it would be a wonder if they did. Busy in worldly concerns, and too much attached to things of less importance, they spend little time in reading and in meditation: they probably go,

from place to place, to hear; but, alas! their eyes are running here and there, and their hearts * are going after their covetousness; little attention is by that mind given to the word of God which has been first polluted, in the house of God, with ideas of the dress or appearance of others. The building decayeth as much by this kind of slothfulness, as by a total withdrawing from the means of grace. Who am I condemning? and whose conduct am I arraigning, but the writer's? who, though not thinking of dress, is frequently under the influence of a worldly spirit, and obliged to make confession with David, My † soul cleaveth to the dust:—and again, how really slothful and idle as to the things of God, and the concerns of the soul? Alas! I feel it; I stand condemned; and I lament it! If I slack my hands, but in one instance, how soon do I feel the house dropping through, and all appears confusion? If I neglect the means, is it any wonder I do not attain to the end? The admission of light discovers; but if I shut my eyes against the light, is it any wonder I do not see? The ‡ entrance of God's word giveth light; but if I neglect the reading it, and meditating upon it—chewing the cud, to make it beneficial, is it at all surprising that the graces of the Spirit, which are cherished and brightened by that appointed mean of grace, should languish

* Ezek. xxiii. 31.

† Psalm cxix. 25.

‡ Ib. 130.

and grow dull? What a composition is made
 what a composition am I! through the introduc-
 tion of sin, that nature, which was at first perfect,
 is full of evil; the consequence is inconsistency;
 the practice hurtful; the end, defilement and mi-
 sery. Here then I find fresh occasion for humi-
 liation, prayer, and the exercise of faith on him
 who possesses all fullness for me:—humiliation
 for my sloth and idleness, my blindness and igno-
 rance, my sin and guilt; prayer for the forgive-
 ness and pardon of all my folly, inconsistency,
 and sin, through and by Christ my Saviour.
 Lord, quicken me with thy free Spirit, that I may
 be more diligent, yea, that I may be giving all
 diligence to make my calling and election sure;
 renew my strength, that I may mount above this
 world, and all the vanities of this life, that I may
 run and not be weary, that I may walk and not
 faint; keep me from slothfulness and all mere
 formality; enliven me, and grant that, by thy
 blessed Spirit's influence, I may be more studious
 of thy word, more observant of thy providences,
 and of thy gracious dispensations, that I may be
 redeeming time since the days are evil;—

Draw me, O God, with sov'reign grace,
 And lift my thoughts on high,
 That I may end this mortal race,
 And see salvation nigh;
 that I may run with patience the race that is set

before me, looking unto Jesus, and relying upon my Saviour God, that through him I shall obtain the prize, eternal glory.

ISAIAH XLIX. 3. 20

Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

LORD, glorify thyself in me, or I shall never glorify thee. So poor, helpless, and ignorant am I, that without thy teaching, the riches of thy grace and strength from thee, I am a mere cypher, a blank in creation. How came I to see and feel my situation? was it always that I entertained these humbling thoughts of myself? How often, under the influence of the pride of my heart deceiving me, have I fancied myself to be rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing; when, at the same time, I was poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. I was concluding myself to be something, when I was not only nothing, but worse than nothing: so should I have continued until this day, if grace had not been given to humble me; if God had not made me sensible of my weakness, ignorance, blindness, and spiritual deadness; thereby bringing me, like the prodigal, to myself.

What is the consequence? That I see the necessity of salvation by grace, through a perfect obedience, and an immaculate sacrifice, even that which is set before me in the scripture—the atoning Lamb of God, a willing offering, and a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all, who, through divine grace, shall be brought to believe in him. O the sovereignty of grace, mercy, and love of God, to make Satan's bond slaves his servants! to make the heirs of hell the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life! Ought not such persons to be glorifying God in faith and fruitfulness? they are called of God into his service; and created again, in Christ Jesus, unto good works. Lord, sanctify me by thy Spirit, that, in serving thee, I may glorify thee.

2 CHRONICLES XXIV. 23.

At the end of the year.

WHAT ought a Christian man, what ought a minister to do? surely to consider what hath been his work for God the preceding part of the year. Consideration is not less necessary than perseverance: the former will naturally lead a spiritual man to Christ for pardon of what is past; the latter will induce him to look to, and make supplication to Christ for grace, strength,

and wisdom, for the time to come. When I look back I see so much defilement adhering to my best services, as coming from me, that I wonder at the Lord's continuing his forbearance and mercy towards me; when I recollect some of my numerous sins of omission, I wonder I have not been cut down as a cumberer of the ground; when I call to mind the ten thousandth part of my known actual transgressions, I see such aboundings of God's mercy to me a sinful, polluted creature, that I immediately set my seal to the Psalmist's declaration:—His* mercy endureth for ever; and when I recollect what I have heard of some professing their love, their regard, their profession for me, as God's honoured instrument in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, I wonder at myself, that my affection should be so dead, my Spirit so dull, and I myself so little affected with the Lord's wonderful condescension and goodness in thus honouring me. How much of the year past has been spent in the service of mine enemies, through sloth, indifference, formality, and wandering! what cause for humility and self-abasement before God! for prayer and earnest supplication to God! Yet what abundant occasions hath the Lord given me for praise and thanksgiving! ought I not to be continually praising God for working in me and

* Psalm cxxvi. 1, &c.

by me? Who am I, and what my father's house, that God should thus honour me? Glory be to God for soul mercies, for bodily mercies, for life, and breath, and all things. Lord, I thank thee, that, worthless as I am, I am still a monument of thy sparing mercy; that ignorant and poor as I am, yet it hath pleased thee to lay me near the heart of some of thy dear children, who pray for me, that I may be enabled to speak boldly, as I ought to speak, the things which concern the glory of God, and the salvation of my fellow sinners. Lord, hear and answer their prayers for thine own glory; give me a double portion of the prophet's spirit, and grace to lay out myself in thy service. The end of the year is come: soon, very soon, the end of my life will come! Grant me, O my God, thy Spirit, that, when my Lord comes, I may be found in his work, I may be found in him, in the cleft of the rock of salvation, Christ Jesus: as thy ministering servant never let me account life precious, but as laid out in thy service, that I may finish my course with joy;—even so Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

Be * thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

ISAIAH LXV. 5.

Stand by thyself; come not near to me; I am holier than thou.

WHATEVER you may think of self, remember this—self is the great enemy. What is thine inscription? The * imagination of thine heart is only evil, from thine youth up. Is it not said, Cursed † is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. What sayest thou now? do you feel your state to be that of separation from God by sin? that you are a transgressor, and the law condemns you? that you are miserable and wretched, helpless and hopeless? The messengers of God announce glad tidings;—salvation by grace; that a Saviour is born, Christ the Lord, to save from the guilt and reigning power of sin; salvation free and full. Salvation is of this Lord;—for whom? The filthy, the unclean:—Come ‡ now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red, like crimson, they shall be as wool. Why so? Because the § blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin,

* Gen. viii. 21.

† Isa. i. 18.

‡ Gal. iii. 10.

§ 1 John i. 7.

GENESIS XXV. 22.

Why am I thus?

23

CONFLICTING with enemies? whence this inward struggling? is it because God hath manifested grace, in communicating a spiritual principle of action, which opposes the working of corrupt nature? Then let me rejoice, that through Christ victory is certain;—triumph is decreed; the wicked principle shall cease from troubling; grace shall prevail; glory is sure!

EPHESIANS II. 5.

By grace are ye saved.

24

IN what does this apply to me? This, I trust, I can set my seal unto:—a lost sinner recovered; a ruined sinner restored; a guilty sinner pardoned; an unholy creature sanctified; a dead sinner quickened; a wandering sinner brought back; a willing sinner, made willing, in the day of Christ's power, to part with sin, self-righteousness, and all that opposed coming to Christ; and now willing to suffer for Christ. Is not this by grace?

O, to grace, what mighty debtor,

Daily I'm constrain'd to be!

Glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

PSALM LV. 22.

Cast thy burden on the Lord.

WHAT sinful stirrings within ! how they wound my peace, deaden my prospects, and check my comforts ! Cast thy burden on the Lord. What I did yesterday I have his warrant for doing again this day : I come then to him, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell for righteousness to justify me ; blood to cleanse me ; the Spirit to sanctify me ; grace to enrich me ; strength to strengthen me ; power to protect me ; counsel to guide me ; life to animate me ; balm to heal my wounds ; and faithfulness to preserve me, and bring me to his heavenly kingdom. O for a strong faith, and a confirmed hope !



DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 14.

Precious fruits by the sun.

THE tree, apparently dead in winter, by the warm influences of the sun in spring puts forth its buds, its blossoms, and, in due time, its fruit : so the sinner, quickened by the Spirit Jehovah, and under the power of Jesus, the glorious sun of righteousness, grows and thrives as a tree planted in the courts of the house of the Lord,

and spiritual life is invigorated. Does not the sun, which this day enlightens and fructifies the earth, address me very powerfully. Hath it arisen? it says, Arise* and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Surely then great is the mercy of the Lord to me, who am naturally a poor dark, dead sinner. Am I, through the power of him who is the † resurrection and the life, risen, from a death in sin, to a life of righteousness? then I shall delight in doing the will of God; and, though my body must set in death, I shall, through the same power, rise to endless glory in the great day of the Lord. Grant, Lord, that, in thy light, I may have light; let me see thee in the sun to be the creator and governor of the world; let me see thee, and know thee, in the sun of righteousness, to be my Father and my God; and enable me to let my light shine before men, that they, seeing the good work of the Spirit, in making me fruitful in every word and work, may be moved to glorify my Father, who is in heaven. Shine into, warm, and fructify my soul, thou glorious Sun in the firmament of the covenant of grace.

* Isa. lx. 1.

† John xi. 25.

1 JOHN IV. 16.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

THY love, O God, made me sensible of my wretchedness, and a suppliant at the throne of grace; thy love superseded that natural fear I had of thee, as a God of strict holiness and inexorable justice, inasmuch as it led me to Christ, the end of the law, for my righteousness and my sacrifice; that slavish principle, which dragged me into thy service, is superseded by that fear which worketh by love. O Lord, I love thee, and would therefore willingly obey thee in all things: I love thee, and therefore desire to spend and be spent in thy service. What hast thou done for me? Brought me to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus. O my soul, stand still and admire that height and depth of divine grace and love, which could pardon those sins, which cried to the Most High for judgment, and saved thee from the lowest pit of perdition. And why is God thus gracious unto me? Because he* will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; because † he delighteth in mercy. Lord Jesus, how great thy grace! Glory be to thee, O God, Father, Son, and Spirit, for redeeming love and sovereign dis-

* Rom. ix. 15.

† Mic. vii. 18.

tinguishing grace. Keep, Lord, this fear alive in my soul : I look up to thee for thy blessing ; look thou upon me in the face of thine Anointed, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name ; increase my faith in thee, and my love and fear of thee, that I may never wilfully depart from my God. The * Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. This is my God's character, and my soul's confidence is in him, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

EPHESIANS II. 5.

By Grace.

BY grace sin is made my burden ; holiness my delight ; and God's service perfect freedom ; coldness in it painful ; and wandering thoughts in it my grief : by grace God is my friend, who possesses all power, knows all my wants, and gives me what is most for my advantage : by affliction he humbles me ; by kindness he melts me ; by love he draws me : by grace God wins me to himself, and enriches me ; by his counsel he guides me ; by his Spirit he influences me ; by Christ's righteousness he justifies me ; by Christ's blood he cleanses me ; and by his power he will preserve

* Psalm cxxvii. 11.

me to his kingdom of glory. Lord, keep me from all spiritual adultery; keep me steadfast in faith and love.

PHILIPPIANS III. 9.

In Him.

AM I in Christ, giving up all for him? Then Christ is in me, my hope of glory. And will he not be found in me? He will; my comfort in mourning; my strength in my weakness; my joy in affliction; my humility in prosperity; my support in sickness; my life in death. Then, O my soul, determine, by God's grace, to give up all for Christ, that, through divine grace, thou mayest be found in him, clothed with his garment of salvation, adorned with the marriage robe of his righteousness, united unto him in spirit, and rejoice in him, thy Lord, through whom there * is now no condemnation to them that are in him, and who are giving this proof of their affections for him, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit:—He † that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.

* Rom. viii. 1.

† 1 Cor. vi. 17.

2 PETER III. 12.

*We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven,
and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

SOUL, art thou looking thus by faith in Christ? then, in God's time, being brought thereunto, thou shalt look back, and see the way in which thou hast been led, the unseen dangers from which thou wast preserved, and that love which, being manifested in Christ, brought thee to seek for peace, happiness, and joy in God; that love which gave into thine understanding light, and, into thy soul, spiritual life. The night of time is far spent, the day of eternity is at hand; this mortal must soon put on immortality. Lord, let increasing years bring increasing desires after thee, and increasing love of thee. Sweet is the rest of the labouring man. Unworthy, and, in myself, totally unmeet for the work, thou hast, in mercy, sent me a labourer into thy vineyard:—make me, I pray thee, faithful unto death! let me be found in my work when my Lord shall come, waiting his coming, and looking for that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness—glorifying in Christ, my resurrection and my life!

1 CORINTHIANS X. 13.

God is faithful.

THOUGH* he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. Lord, I see thee faithful in the execution of thy promise. Seed † time and harvest shall not fail: in the ministry of thy word, they ‡ shall be taught of God; in quickening dead sinners, the § dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live; in strengthening weak sinners, I will || strengthen thee; in raising fallen sinners, though ¶ he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down. Rejoice** not against me, O mine enemy!—God is mine.

HOSEA XIV. 4.

I will heal their backslidings.

WHAT encouragement do I meet with here to come and to spread my case before the Lord! Thou knowest, O my God, the troubles of my heart are enlarged; O, bring thou me out

* Lam. iii. 32.

† Gen. viii. 22.

‡ Isa. liv. 13.

§ John v. 25.

|| Zech. x. 12.

¶ Pf. xxxvii. 24.

** Mic. vii. 8.

of my distresses ! thou knowest the desires of my soul are to thee and to thy ways ; heal my backslidings ; and, at all times, guide me with thy counsel, and influence me by thy Spirit ; enrich me with thy grace ; strengthen me with all might in the inner man ; and let me find, that as are my days, so is my strength ; so sprinkle my conscience with the blood of Christ, that it may be purged from all dead works, to serve thee the living God ; purify my heart by faith, and sanctify my spirit, that the * words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, may always be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer ; keep me, O Lord, in the moment of temptation ; and enable me to rejoice in thy love, and that thine anger is turned away from me.

ISAIAH LIV. 5.

Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

O SOUL, take encouragement, and, under all thy distress, fly to that holy child Jesus, who is the only refuge set before thee in the gospel. Justice satisfied by Christ the surety ; thou art justified in looking to Christ for thy

* Psalm xix. 14.

salvation:—Look to Christ, and be ye saved! While I consider Christ, honouring God's law, and satisfying divine justice, let me feel a deeper sense of my unworthiness, and of my God's holiness, love, grace, and mercy, that I may thereby be excited to greater practical holiness.

3

ROMANS VIII. 12.

We are debtors.

A DEBTOR I am to that God who hath made me a partaker of that mercy which is through Christ, who died to redeem me from the curse of the law, and rose again for my justification; a debtor to that Christ, who became my surety, and paid my debt to the law and justice of God; a debtor to him who hath brought me out of darkness into his marvellous light; a debtor to him who hath quickened my soul; or why is it that I feel, lament, hunger, and thirst, and desire conformity to the image of Christ? or why do I feel flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh? or why do I see so much evil in my heart, and so abundant a remedy in Christ, which drives me, and draws me to him for salvation and eternal redemption? I am a debtor for my being, ex-

istence, and salvation, to Christ, the creator of the worlds, by whom all things subsist, and in whom every believer has redemption * through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. O Lord, let me see more clearly the infinite obligation I am under to thee, my Creator, for placing me in that rank of intelligent creatures in which thou hast made me ; for preserving me when hanging upon my mother's breast, through the age of infancy, youth, and manhood, and constantly supplying my returning wants ; for sparing me in thy astonishing mercy, notwithstanding innumerable crimes of the most crimson dye, by me committed, that thou mightest manifest gracious saving mercy to me, the vilest of sinners. What a fullness must there be in thee, O my Saviour, to pardon such aggravated, complicated crimes as mine ! I am debtor to thee for wisdom †, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

PSALM LXXXIX. 19.

I have laid help upon One that is mighty.

REJOICE, O my soul ! Christ is this mighty one ; he is the ‡ mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Am I a sinner ?

* Col. i. 14.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

‡ Isa. ix. 6.

Christ died for sinners ;—to him I fly for pardon. Am I weak and helpless ? Christ is the helper of all that flee unto him for succour. Am I ignorant ? The Lord declares, If * any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally. Come then, my fellow-sinner, under a sense of thy numerous wants, to that Saviour who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is, who keepeth his promise for ever ; he possesses all fullness, as he is God † over all, blessed for ever ; and as he is God and man, one Christ, so is he the only mediator ‡ between God and man ; the § fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily ; and it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in him, the head of his church, for every individual member thereof—salvation, redemption, wisdom, power, grace, glory ; out of his own fullness he will communicate for their help : he it is who fills heaven and earth ; every creature is a proof of his goodness, his regard for man ; those which minister to his bodily support call for gratitude ; those which are noxious and offensive call for humility ; for nothing could be unpleasant to man if he were not a sinner : and since man cannot deliver himself, how astonishing the mercy of God in the gift of his Son ! Lord, bless me

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* James i. 5.

† Rom. ix. 5.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

§ Col. ii. 9.

with poverty of spirit, but give me the riches of thy grace ; make me more sensible of my helplessness, and I will, through thy grace, come more to Christ ; and let me constantly find that my help cometh of the Lord, the mighty One, upon whom help is laid for the helpless.

FINIS.

6 JU 62

